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THE

WORKS

OF

THE REV. H. SCOUGAL,

A. M. S. T. P.

CONTAINING

THE LIFE OF GOD IN THE SOUL OF MAN;

WITH

Nine other Discourses

ON IMPORTANT SUBJECTS.

TO WHICH IS ADDED,

A SERMON

PREACHED AT THE AUTHOR'S FUNERAL,

BY GEORGE GAIRDEN, D. D.

Perfectionis ac felicitatis summum est uniri Deo.

BOSTON:

STEREOTYPED FROM THE LAST LONDON EDITION,

BY LYMAN THURSTON AND CO.

Peirce and Williams.

1829.

NOTICE FOR THE AMERICAN EDITION.

AMONG those who have been ripened early for usefulness, and after being eminently useful, have been early removed to the 'rest that remaineth for the people of God,' few have been more celebrated for a lovely, unobtrusive piety than SCOUGAL. Bishop *Burnet*, with a name high in public esteem, and engagements numerous and important in public life, did not deem it unworthy of his station and character to become a warm eulogist of the young author, and of that work of his, which was published in his lifetime. This, his main work, and which has gained him most reputation, 'The life of God in the soul of man,' has been the delight of the pious for a century and a half. It cannot be necessary to repeat the praises bestowed on it—for its simplicity, fervor, method of arrangement, and exhibition of the genuine amiableness of religion. That its publication is seasonable at the present time, in order to direct the attention of its readers from subjects of *doubtful disputation* to the *diligent keeping of the heart*, no self-observer can question. It has, indeed, been reprinted often—but, so far as the writer of this brief notice is informed, never accompanied in America with the Sermons of the author. These, and the discourse delivered on his death, with a preface by a former editor, can hardly fail to render the present edition acceptable to the friends of true piety in America.

Boston, May 6, 1829.

Spec
609
Scougal
1829

PREFACE.

MR. HENRY SCOUGAL, the worthy author of the following book, was born about the end of June, in the year 1650.

His father, Mr. Patrick Scougal, was sometime minister at Salton, and afterwards Bishop of Aberdeen; in which See he sat above twenty years from the Restoration. He was married to Margaret Wemyss, daughter to a gentleman in Fife, by whom he had three sons and two daughters. John Scougal, the eldest son, became Commissary of Aberdeen. Our author was the second. The youngest son, James, upon his eldest brother's death, succeeded him in the commissariat; which post he sold to Mr. Robert Paterson, father to the late Commissary of Aberdeen. He then went to Edinburgh; where he was made one of the senators of the College of Justice, by the title of Lord Whitehill. Catharine Scougal, the elder daughter, married Alexander Scrogie, Bishop of Argyle; and Jane, the younger, became spouse to Mr. Patrick Sibbald, one of the ministers of Aberdeen.

But to return to our author. From his childhood, he made uncommon progress in divine, as well as human learning. At the age of fifteen, he went to the University; where he finished his courses in four years' time: and scarce had he ceased to be a pupil, when he became a Professor. Having adorned this character four years, the more immediate service of God in his church, required him to enter into holy orders; and he was soon after settled at Auchterless, a small village about twenty miles from Aberdeen. Here he had preached the gospel but the space of one year, when he was called to Aberdeen, and promoted to the Professorship of Divinity, in King's College there, though yet no more than four and twenty. This important function he discharged with the highest honour, till about his twenty-

seventh year, that he fell into a consumption, which wasted him, by slow degrees, and, at last, put an end to his valuable life, on the 13th of June, 1678, before he had completed the twenty-eighth year of his age. He was buried in King's College church, Old Aberdeen, and the following inscription was put upon his tombstone:—

MEMORIÆ SACRUM

HENRICUS SCOUGAL;

REVERENDI IN CHRISTO PATRIS PATRICII EPISCOPI
ABERDONENSIS FILIUS:
PHILOSOPHIÆ IN HAC ACADEMIA REGIA,
PER QUADRIENNIUM, TOTIDEMQUE ANNIS
IBIDEM THEOLOGIÆ PROFESSOR:
ECCLESIÆ IN AUCHTERLESS, UNO ANNO INTERSTITE,
PASTOR.
MULTA IN TAM BREVISSIMO CURRICULO
DIDICIT, PRÆSTITIT, DOCUIT,
CŒLI AVIDUS, ET CŒLO MATURUS,
OBIIT ANNO DOM. MDCLXXVIII,
ÆTATIS SUÆ XXVIII.
ET HIC EXUVIAS MORTALITATIS POSUIT.

For a more particular account of our author's life and character, we refer the reader to the sermon preached at his funeral, by Dr. George Gairden, which was first published, from an authentic manuscript, by the Reverend Mr. Cockburn, sometime minister of St. Paul's at Aberdeen, and which we have here subjoined to Mr. Scougal's discourses.

Besides the works now published, our author left behind him some occasional reflections, and moral essays, which had been the exercises of his retired moments, while but a student at the University; as, also, three manuscript tracts in Latin, viz: A short System of Ethics, or Moral Philosophy; a Preservative against the Artifices of the Roman Missionaries; and a Treatise of the Pastoral Care: the last unfinished.

The works of this excellent author have too well recommended themselves, to need any new encomiums. It can, however, be no improper preface to this edition, (which we hope will be found a correct one,) to present the reader with the accounts of the following discourses, which the reverend and learned men who formerly published them, have prefixed to their respective editions.

The sermons were first collected, and made public, by the above Mr. Cockburn; who tells us "he was encouraged to it, by some persons no less eminent for their piety and virtue, than for their birth and quality. I have endeavoured," says he, "to give them as correct as possible; though some of the manuscripts I was obliged to make use of, had not been transcribed with that care and exactness they ought. It cannot be expected," continues he, "that these discourses, which were never designed by the author for the press, can appear with the same advantage as the Treatise," (meaning The Life of God in the Soul of Man) "which, at the persuasion of his friends, was published in his life-time; yet, as they retain the same spirit and genius, and give the same clear and persuasive notions of religion, it is hoped they will be favourably received, as well as that they may be very profitable to the candid and serious reader."

But now, to come to our author's noblest and most perfect work, The Life of God in the Soul of Man. This discourse was first published about the year 1677, in the author's life-time, by the Reverend Dr. Burnett, afterwards bishop of Sarum, who introduced it into the world with the following account: "It was written by a pious and learned countryman of mine, for the private use of a noble friend of the author's, without the least design of making it more public. Others seeing it, were much taken both with the excellent purposes it contained, and the great clearness and pleasantness of the style; the natural method, and the shortness of it; and desired it might be made a more public good: and knowing some interest I had with the author, it was referred to me whether it should lie in a private closet, or be let go abroad. I was not long in suspense, having read it over; and knowing that the author had written out nothing here, but what he himself did well feel and know: and therefore, it being a transcript of those divine impressions that are upon his own heart, I hope the native and unforced genuineness of it, will both delight and edify the reader."

The Reverend Dr. Gairden, in our author's funeral sermon, speaks much to the same effect. "Sure, whoever considers the importance of the matter of that book, the clear representation of the life and spirit of true religion, and its graces, the great excellency and advantages of it, the proposal of the most effectual means for attaining to it by the grace of God, the piety and seasonableness of the devotions, together with the natural and affectionate eloquence of the style, cannot but be sensible of its great usefulness, to inspire us with the spirit of true religion; to enlighten our minds with a right sense and knowledge of it; to warm our hearts with suitable affections and breathings after it, and to direct our lives to the practice of it."

To the same purpose, let us hear the before mentioned Mr. Cockburn. "The clear style, and easy method of our author, the just and amiable representation he gives of religion, in this little treatise, have made it deservedly valued and esteemed by all judicious persons: and it has become a happy means of giving right notions of religion to many, making them in love with it, and putting them upon the practice of what they saw was infinitely desirable in itself, and, with some pains and industry, attainable by them."

The Reverend Dr. Wishart, Principal of the College of Edinburgh, published, some years ago, a small edition of this incomparable Treatise, with a recommendatory preface, equally pious, candid, and judicious; an extract of which will, therefore, very properly conclude our preface.

"Since I had the happiness to become acquainted with this book, I have heartily blessed God for the benefit I have received to my own soul, by the perusal of it; and have earnestly wished it had a place in every family; was carefully perused by every one who can read; and that the sentiments of pure and undefiled religion it contains, were impressed upon every heart.

"The things which especially recommend the book to my heart, and which, I think, cannot fail to recommend it to the heart of every serious peruser of it, are: 1. The just notions it contains of real and vital religion, in opposition to the common mistakes concerning it, and the view it gives us of that ingenuous spirit which belongs to true piety; with a just allowance, at the same time, to the proper influence of external motives. 2. The excellency and force of the motives by which true religion is here recommended, together with

the energy and warmth with which they are delivered. 3. The excellent directions here given, for attaining true piety and goodness. 4. The prudence and charity the worthy author discovers, in avoiding matters of doubtful disputation, about which the best and wisest men differ, while he is treating of matters of the greatest importance, about which all good and wise men must agree. And oh! had we more of that true Christian spirit, so beautifully delineated, and so warmly recommended in this book, I cannot but think, that the fierceness of our contentions and animosities about things of lesser moment, must considerably abate. In fine, that vein of good sense and clear thought, and of serious piety, which runs through the whole of this performance, exceedingly commended it to me.

"For these reasons, I earnestly recommend this book to the careful perusal of all with whom my recommendation may be of any weight; particularly to the people of those congregations of which I have had, or now have the oversight.

"I would, in a particular manner, recommend it to the rising generation; in whose education I have the honour to have a considerable charge. And oh! that I could be so happy as to make them sensible, how much it would contribute to the peace and satisfaction of their whole after-life, to have their minds and hearts early possessed of such just notions of true piety and goodness, and such a prevailing liking to it, as this excellent book tends to promote; how much, I say, this would conduce to their true enjoyment in a present life, even though we should set aside the consideration of that eternal state, to which we are all hastening apace, and whether the youngest of us knows not how soon he may take his flight. The chief part, and valuable end, of all true knowledge and learning, is, the rectifying and improvement of the heart. I would, especially, recommend this book to our young students, who have their views toward the sacred function. I cannot but reckon, that the most necessary part of preparation for that important work, is, to have such a just understanding of the great design of religion and Christianity, and such a test of true piety and goodness, as this book tends to inspire us with. An honest and good heart is the main thing necessary for preaching the word of God, as well as for hearing it, with profit

"In fine, I hope I may take the liberty to recommend it to my younger brethren in the holy ministry. The careful perusal of this little book may, I hope, contribute to the further improvement of their notions of religion, and to promote in them that rational piety and real goodness, in which they ought to be examples to their flocks. It may also afford them excellent hints to be improved upon, according to the abilities God has given them in their public performances. There are few paragraphs in this excellent book, but what may be profitably enlarged into a sermon. And oh! my brethren, how may it put us to the blush, and what a holy emulation should it raise in us, to know, that the worthy author of this admirable book, composed it before he was twenty-seven years of age! what a spur to our diligence, that he came to the end and reward of his labours before he was eight and twenty!"

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THE LIFE OF GOD

IN THE

SOUL OF MAN.

My dear Friend,

THIS designation doth give you a title to all the endeavours whereby I can serve your interests; and your pious inclinations do so happily conspire with my duty, that I shall not need to step out of my road to gratify you; but I may at once perform an office of friendship, and discharge an exercise of my function, since the advancing of virtue and holiness (which I hope you make your greatest study) is the peculiar business of my employment. This, therefore, is the most proper instance wherein I can vent my affection, and express my gratitude towards you; and I shall not any longer delay the performance of the promise I made you to this purpose. For though I know you are provided with better helps of this nature than any I can offer you; nor are you like to meet with any thing here which you knew not before; yet I am hopeful, that what cometh from one whom you are pleased to honour with your friendship, and which is more particularly designed for your use, will be kindly accepted by you; and God's providence perhaps may so direct my thoughts, that something or other may prove useful to you. Nor shall I doubt your pardon, if, for moulding my discourse into the better frame, I lay a low foundation, beginning with the nature and properties of religion, and all along give such way to my thoughts in the prosecution of the subject, as may bring me to say many things which were not necessary, did I only consider to whom I am writing.

Mistakes about religion.

I cannot speak of religion, but I must lament, that, among so many pretenders to it, so few understand what it means: some placing it in the understanding, in orthodox notions and opinions; and all the account they can give of their religion is, that they are of this or the other persuasion, and have joined themselves to one of those many sects whereinto Christendom is most unhappily divided. Others place it in the outward man, in a constant course of external duties, and a model of performances: if they live peaceably with their neighbours, keep a temperate diet, observe the returns of worship, frequenting the church and their closet, and sometimes extend their hands to the relief of the poor, they think they have sufficiently acquitted themselves. Others again put all religion in the affections, in rapturous heats and ecstatic devotion; and all they aim at, is, to pray with passion, and think of heaven with pleasure, and to be affected with those kind and melting expressions wherewith they court their Saviour, till they persuade themselves that they are mightily in love with him; and from thence assume a great confidence of their salvation, which they esteem the chief of Christian graces. Thus are those things which have any resemblance of piety, and at the best are but means of obtaining it, or particular exercises of it, frequently mistaken for the whole of religion; nay, sometimes wickedness and vice pretend to that name. I speak not now of those gross impieties wherewith the heathens were wont to worship their gods: there are but too many Christians who would consecrate their vices, and hallow their corrupt affections; whose rugged humour, and sullen pride, must pass for Christian severity; whose fierce wrath, and bitter rage against their enemies, must be called holy zeal; whose petulancy towards their superiors, or rebellion against their governors, must have the name of Christian courage and resolution.

What religion is.

But certainly religion is quite another thing; and they who are acquainted with it, will entertain far different thoughts, and disdain all those shadows and false imitations of it. They know by experience, that true religion is an union of the soul with God, a real participation of the divine nature, the very image of God drawn upon the soul; or, in the Apostle's phrase, *it is Christ formed within us*. Briefly, I know not how the nature of religion can be more fully expressed, than by calling it *a divine life*. And under these terms I shall discourse of it; showing first how it is called *a life*, and then how it is termed *divine*.

The permanency and stability of religion.

I choose to express it by the name of *life*; first, because of its permanency and stability. Religion is not a sudden start, or passion of the mind; not though it should rise to the height of a rapture and seem to transport a man to extraordinary performances. There are few but have convictions of the necessity of doing something for the salvation of their souls, which may push them forward some steps with a great deal of seeming haste. But anon they flag and give over: they were in a hot mood, but now they are cooled: they did shoot forth fresh and high, but are quickly withered, because they had no root in themselves. These sudden fits may be compared to the violent and convulsive motions of bodies newly beheaded, caused by the agitations of the animal spirits, after the soul is departed; which however violent and impetuous, can be of no long continuance: whereas the motions of holy souls are constant and regular, proceeding from a permanent and lively principle. It is true, this divine life continueth not always in the same strength and vigour, but many times suffers sad decays; and holy men find greater difficulty in resisting temptations, and less alacrity in the performance of their duties: yet it is not quite extinguished, nor are they abandoned to the power of those corrupt affections which sway and overrule the rest of the world

The freedom and unconstrainedness of religion.

Again, religion may be defined by the name of *life*, because it is an inward, free, and self-moving principle; and those who have made progress in it, are not actuated only by external motives, driven merely by threatenings, nor bribed by promises, nor constrained by laws; but are powerfully inclined to that which is good, and delight in the performance of it. The love which a pious man bears to God and goodness, is not so much by virtue of a command enjoining him so to do, as by a new nature instructing and prompting him to it; nor doth he pay his devotions as an unavoidable tribute, only to appease the divine justice, or quiet his clamorous conscience; but those religious exercises are the proper emanations of the divine life, the natural employments of the new-born soul. He prays, and gives thanks, and repents, not only because these things are commanded, but rather because he is sensible of his wants, and of the divine goodness, and of the folly and misery of a sinful life. His charity is not forced, nor his alms extorted from him: his love makes him willing to give; and though there were no outward obligation, his *heart would devise liberal things*. Injustice and intemperance, and all other vices, are as contrary to *his* temper and constitution, as the basest actions are to the most generous spirit, and impudence and scurrility to those who are naturally modest: so that I may well say with St. John, *Whosoever is born of God, doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.* Though holy and religious persons do much eye the law of God, and have a great regard unto it; yet it is not so much the sanction of the law, as its reasonableness, and purity, and goodness, which do prevail with them: they account it excellent and desirable in itself, and that in keeping of it there is great reward; and that divine love wherewith they are actuated, makes them become a law unto themselves.

Quis legem det amantibus?
Major est amor lex ipse sibi.

Who shall prescribe a law to those that love?
Love's a more powerful law which doth them move.

In a word, what our blessed Saviour said of himself, is in some measure applicable to his followers, that *it is their meat and drink to do their Father's will:* and as the natural appetite is carried out toward food, though we should not reflect on the necessity of it for the preservation of our lives; so are they carried with a natural and unforced propension toward that which is good and commendable. It is true, external motives are many times of great use to excite and stir up this inward principle, especially in its infancy and weakness, when it is often so languid that the man himself can scarce discern it, hardly being able to move one step forward, but when he is pushed by his hopes, or his fears; by the pressure of an affliction, or the sense of a mercy; by the authority of the law, or the persuasion of others. Now, if such a person be conscientious and uniform in his obedience, and earnestly groaning under the sense of his dulness, and is desirous to perform his duties with more spirit and vigour: these are the first motions of the divine life, which, though it be faint and weak, will surely be cherished by the influences of heaven, and grow unto greater maturity. But he who is utterly destitute of this inward principle, and doth not aspire unto it, but contents himself with those performances whereunto he is prompted by education or custom, by the fear of hell, or carnal notions of heaven, can no more be accounted a religious person, than a puppet can be called a man. This forced and artificial religion is commonly heavy and languid, like the motion of a weight forced upward; it is cold and spiritless, like the uneasy compliance of a wife married against her will, who carries it dutifully toward the husband whom she doth not love, out of some sense of virtue or honour. Hence also this religion is scant and niggardly, especially in those duties which do greatest violence to men's carnal inclinations; and those slavish spirits will be sure to do no more than is

absolutely required: it is a law that compels them, and they will be loth to go beyond what it stints them to; nay, they will ever be putting such glosses on it, as may leave themselves the greatest liberty; whereas the spirit of true religion is frank and liberal, far from such peevish and narrow reckoning; and he who hath given himself entirely unto God, will never think he doth too much for him.

Religion a divine principle.

By this time I hope it doth appear, that religion is, with a great deal of reason, termed *a life*, or vital principle; and that it is very necessary to distinguish between it, and that obedience which is constrained and depends on external causes. I come next to give an account why I defined it by the name of *divine life*. And so it may be called, not only in regard to its fountain and original, having God for its author, and being wrought in the souls of men by the power of his Holy Spirit; but also in regard of its nature, religion being a resemblance of the divine perfections, the image of the Almighty shining in the soul of man: nay, it is a real participation of his nature; it is a beam of the eternal light, a drop of that infinite ocean of goodness; and they who are endued with it, may be said to have *God dwelling in their souls and Christ formed within them.*

What the natural life is.

Before I descend to a more particular consideration of that divine life wherein true religion doth consist, it will be fit to speak a little of that natural or animal life which prevails in those who are strangers to the other. And by this I understand nothing else, but our inclination and propension toward those things which are pleasing and acceptable to nature; or self love issuing forth and spreading itself into as many branches as men have several appetites and inclinations. The root and foundation of the animal life I reckon to be *sense*, taking it largely, as it is opposed unto faith, and importeth our perception and sensation of things that are either grate-

ful or troublesome to us. Now, these animal affections considered in themselves, and as they are implanted in us by nature, are not vicious or blameable; nay, they are instances of the wisdom of the creator furnishing his creatures with such appetites as tend to the preservation and welfare of their lives. These are instead of a law unto the brute beasts, whereby they are directed towards the ends for which they were made. But man, being made for higher purposes, and to be guided by more excellent laws, becomes guilty and criminal when he is so far transported by the inclinations of this lower life, as to violate his duty, or neglect the higher and more noble designs of his creation. Our natural affections are not wholly to be extirpated and destroyed, but only to be moderated and overruled by a superior and more excellent principle. In a word, the difference between a religious and a wicked man is, that in the one divine life bears sway, in the other the animal life doth prevail.

The different tendencies of the natural life.

But it is strange to observe, unto what different courses this natural principle will sometimes carry those who are wholly guided by it, according to the diverse circumstances that concur with it to determine them; and then not considering this, doth frequently occasion very dangerous mistakes, making men think well of themselves by reason of that seeming difference which is between them and others; whereas perhaps their actions do all the while flow from one and the same original. If we consider the natural temper and constitution of men's souls, we shall find some to be airy, frolicksome, and light, which makes their behaviour extravagant and ridiculous; whereas others are naturally serious and severe, and their whole carriage composed into such gravity as gains them a great deal of reverence and esteem. Some are of an humorsome, rugged, and morose temper, and can neither be pleased themselves, nor endure that others should be so. But all are not born with such sour and unhappy dispositions; for some persons have a certain sweetness and benignity rooted in

their natures, and they find the greatest pleasure in the endearments of society, and the mutual complacency of friends, and covet nothing more than to have every body obliged to them. And it is well that nature hath provided this complexional tenderness to supply the defect of true charity in the world, and to incline men to do something for one another's welfare. Again, in regard of education, some have never been taught to follow any other rules, than those of pleasure or advantage: but others are so inured to observe the strictest rules of decency and honour, and some instances of virtue, that they are hardly capable of doing any thing which they have been accustomed to look upon as base and unworthy.

In fine, it is no small difference in the deportment of mere natural men, that doth arise from the strength or weakness of their wit or judgment, and from their care or negligence in using them. Intemperance and lust, injustice and oppression, and all those other impieties which abound in the world, and render it so miserable, are the issues of self-love, the effect of the *animal life*, when it is neither overpowered by religion, nor governed by natural reason. But if it once take hold of reason, and get judgment and wit to be of its party, it will many times disdain the grosser sort of vices, and spring up unto fair imitations of virtue and goodness. If a man have but so much reason as to consider the prejudice which intemperance and inordinate lust do bring upon his health, his fortune, and his reputation, self-love may suffice to restrain him; and one may observe the rules of moral justice in dealing with others, as the best way to secure his own interest, and maintain his credit in the world. But this is not all. This natural principle, by the help of reason, may take a higher flight, and come nigher the instances of piety and religion. It may incline a man to the diligent study of divine truths; for why should not these, as well as other speculations, be pleasant and grateful to curious and inquisitive minds? It may make men zealous in maintaining and propagating such opinions as

they have espoused, and be very desirous that others should submit unto their judgment, and approve the choice of religion which they themselves have made. It may make them delight to hear and compose excellent discourses about the matters of religion; for eloquence is very pleasant whatever be the subject. Nay, some it may dispose to no small height of sensible devotion. The glorious things that are spoken of heaven, may make even a carnal heart in love with it; the metaphors and similitudes made use of in scripture, of crowns and sceptres, and rivers of pleasure, &c. will easily affect a man's fancy, and make him wish to be there, though he neither understand nor desire those spiritual pleasures which are described and shadowed forth by them: and when such a person comes to believe that Christ has purchased those glorious things for him, he may feel a kind of tenderness and affection towards so great a benefactor, and imagine that he is mightily enamoured with him, and yet all the while continue a stranger to the holy temper and spirit of the blessed Jesus. And what hand the natural constitution may have in the rapturous devotions of some melancholy persons, hath been excellently discovered of late by several learned and judicious pens.

To conclude: there is nothing proper to make a man's life pleasant, or himself eminent and conspicuous in the world, but this natural principle, assisted by wit and reason, may prompt him to it. And though I do not condemn these things in themselves, yet it concerns us nearly to know and consider their nature, both that we may keep within due bounds, and also that we may learn never to value ourselves on the account of such attainments, nor lay the stress of religion upon our natural appetites or performances.

Wherein the divine life doth consist.

It is now time to return to the consideration of that *divine life* whereof I was discoursing before; that *life which is hid with Christ in God*, and therefore hath no glorious show or appearance in the world, and to

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the natural man will seem a mean and insipid notion As the animal life consisteth in that narrow and confined love which is terminated on a man's self, and in his propension towards those things that are pleasing to nature; so the divine life stands in an universal and unbounded affection, and in the mastery over our natural inclinations, that they may never be able to betray us to those things which we know to be blameable. The root of the divine life is faith; the chief branches are, love to God, charity to man, purity and humility: for (as an excellent person hath well observed) however these names be common and vulgar, and make no extraordinary sound; yet do they carry such a mighty sense, that the tongue of man or angel can pronounce nothing more weighty or excellent. *Faith* hath the same place in the divine life which *sense* hath in the natural, being indeed nothing else but a kind of sense, or feeling persuasion of spiritual things. It extends itself unto all divine truths: but, in our lapsed estate, it hath a peculiar relation to the declarations of God's mercy and reconcilableness to sinners through a Mediator; and therefore, receiving its denomination from that principal object, is ordinarily termed *faith in Jesus Christ.*

The *love* of God is a delightful and affectionate sense of the divine perfections, which makes the soul resign and sacrifice itself wholly unto him, desiring above all things to please him, and delighting in nothing so much as in fellowship and communion with him, and being ready to do or suffer any thing for his sake, or at his pleasure. Though this affection may have its first rise from the favours and mercies of God towards ourselves, yet doth it in its growth and progress transcend such particular considerations, and ground itself on his infinite goodness manifested in all the works of creation and providence. A soul thus possessed with divine love, must needs be enlarged towards all mankind in a sincere and unbounded affection, because of the relation they have to God, being his creatures, and having something of his image stamped upon them. And this is that *charity* I named as the second branch of religion, and under

which all the parts of justice, all the duties we owe to our neighbour, are eminently comprehended: for he who doth truly love all the world, will be nearly concerned in the interest of every one; and so far from wronging or injuring any person, that he will resent any evil that befalls others, as if it happened to himself.

By *purity*, I understand a due abstractedness from the body, and mastery over the inferior appetites; or such a temper and disposition of mind, as makes a man despise, and abstain from all pleasures and delights of sense or fancy which are sinful in themselves or tend to extinguish or lessen our relish of more divine and intellectual pleasures; which doth also infer a resoluteness to undergo all those hardships he may meet with in the performance of his duty. So that not only chastity and temperance, but also Christian courage and magnanimity may come under this head.

Humility imports a deep sense of our own weakness, with a hearty and affectionate acknowledgement of our owing all that we are to the divine bounty; which is always accompanied with a profound submission to the will of God, and great deadness towards the glory of the world, and applause of men.

These are the highest perfections that either men or angels are capable of; the very foundation of heaven laid in the soul. And he who hath attained them, needs not desire to pry into the hidden rolls of God's decrees, or search the volumes of heaven, to know what is determined about his everlasting condition; but he may find a copy of God's thoughts concerning him written in his own breast. His love to God may give him assurance of God's favour to him; and those beginnings of happiness which he feels in the conformity of the powers of his soul to the nature of God, and compliance with his will, are a sure pledge that his felicity shall be perfected, and continued to all eternity. And it is not without reason that one said, "I had rather see the real impressions of a God-like nature upon my own soul, than have a vision from heaven, or an angel sent to tell me that my name was enrolled in the book of life."

Religion better understood by actions than by words.

When we have said all that we can, the secret mysteries of a new nature and divine life can never be sufficiently expressed; language and words cannot reach them: nor can they be truly understood but by those souls that are enkindled within, and awakened unto the sense and relish of spiritual things. *There is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth him understanding.* The power and life of religion may be better expressed in actions than in words; because actions are more lively things, and do better represent the inward principle whence they proceed; and therefore we may take the best measure of those gracious endowments from the deportment of those in whom they reside; especially as they are perfectly exemplified in the holy life of our blessed Saviour; a main part of whose business in this world, was, to teach by his practice what he did require of others, and to make his own conversation an exact resemblance of those unparalleled rules which he prescribed: so that if ever true goodness was visible to mortal eyes, it was then when his presence did beautify and illustrate this lower world.

Divine love exemplified in our Saviour:—His diligence in doing God's will, and His patience in bearing it.

That sincere and devout affection wherewith his blessed soul did constantly burn towards his heavenly Father, did express itself in an entire resignation to his will. It was his *very meat, to do the will, and finish the work of him that sent him.* This was the exercise of his childhood, and the constant employment of his riper age. He spared no travail or pains while he was about his Father's business, but took such infinite content and satisfaction in the performance of it, that when, being faint and weary with his journey, he rested himself on Jacob's well, and entreated water of the *Samaritan* woman; the success of his conference with her,

and the accession that was made to the kingdom of God, filled his mind with such delight, as seemed to have redounded to his very body, refreshing his spirits, and making him forget the thirst whereof he complained before, and refuse the meat which he had sent his disciples to buy. Nor was he less patient and submissive in suffering the will of God, than diligent in doing of it. He endured the sharpest afflictions and extremest miseries that ever were inflicted on any mortal, without a repining thought, or discontented word. For though he was far from a stupid insensibility, or a fantastic or Stoical obstinacy, and had as quick a sense of pain as other men, and the deepest apprehension of what he was to suffer in his soul, (as his *bloody sweat*, and the *sore amazement* and *sorrow* which he professed, do abundantly declare); yet did he entirely submit to that severe dispensation of providence, and willingly acquiesced in it.

And he prayed to God, that *if it were possible*, (or, as one of the Evangelists hath it, *if he were willing*,) *that cup might be removed;* yet he gently added, *Nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done.* Of what strange importance are the expressions, *John* xii. 27, where he first acknowledgeth the anguish of his spirit, *Now is my soul troubled;* which would seem to produce a kind of demur, *And what shall I say?* and then he goes on to deprecate his sufferings, *Father, save me from this hour;* which he had no sooner uttered, but he doth, as it were, on second thoughts, recall it, in these words, *But for this cause came I into the world;* and concludes, *Father, glorify thy name.* Now, we must not look on this as any levity, or blameable weakness in the blessed Jesus. He knew all along what he was to suffer, and did most resolutely undergo it. But it shows us the inconceivable weight and pressure that he was to bear; which, being so afflicting, and contrary to nature, he could not think of without terror; yet, considering the will of God, and the glory which was to redound to him from thence, he was not only content but desirous to suffer it.

Our Saviour's constant devotion.

Another instance of his love to God, was, his delight in conversing with him by prayer; which made him frequently retire from the world, and with the greatest devotion and pleasure spend whole nights in that heavenly exercise, though he had no sins to confess, and but few secular interests to pray for; which, alas! are almost the only things that are wont to drive us to our devotions. Nay, we may say his whole life was a kind of prayer, a constant course of communion with God; if the sacrifice was not always offering, yet was the fire still kept alive: nor was ever the blessed Jesus surprised with that dulness or tepidity of spirit which we must many times wrestle with, before we can be fit for the exercise of devotion.

Our Saviour's charity to men.

In the second place, I should speak of his love and charity towards all men. But he who would express it, must transcribe the history of the gospel, and comment upon it: for scarce any thing is recorded to have been done or spoken by him, which was not designed for the good and advantage of some one or other. All his miraculous works were instances of his goodness, as well as his power; and they benefited those on whom they were wrought, as well as they amazed the beholders. His charity was not confined to his kindred or relations; nor was all his kindness swallowed up in the endearments of that peculiar friendship which he carried towards the beloved disciple, but every one was his *friend* who obeyed his *holy commands*, John xv. 14; and *whosoever did the will of his Father*, the same was to him as *his brother, and sister, and mother.*

Never was any unwelcome to him who came with an honest intention; nor did he deny any request which tended to the good of those that asked it. So that what was spoken of that Roman Emperor, whom for his goodness they called the *darling of mankind*, was really performed by him; that never any departed from

him with a heavy countenance, except that rich youth, *Mark* x. who was sorry to hear that the kingdom of heaven stood at so high a rate, and that he could not save his soul and his money too. And certainly it troubled our Saviour, to see that when a price was in his hand to get wisdom, yet he had no heart to it. The ingenuity that appeared in his first address, had already procured some kindness for him; for it is said, *and Jesus beholding him, loved him.* But must he for his sake cut out a new way to heaven, and alter the nature of things, which make it impossible that a covetous man should be happy?

And what shall I speak of his meekness, who could encounter the monstrous ingratitude and dissimulation of that miscreant who betrayed him, in no harsher terms than these, *Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?* What further evidence could we desire of his fervent and unbounded charity, than that he willingly laid down his life even for his most bitter enemies; and, mingling his prayers with his blood, besought the Father that his death might not be laid to their charge, but might become the means of eternal life to those very persons who procured it?

Our Saviour's purity.

The third branch of the divine life is *purity;* which, as I said, consists in a neglect of worldly enjoyments and accommodations, and a resolute enduring of all such troubles as we meet with in the doing of our duty. Now, surely, if ever any person was wholly dead to all the pleasures of the natural life, it was the blessed Jesus, who seldom tasted them when they came in his way; but never stepped out of his road to seek them. Though he allowed others the comforts of wedlock, and honoured marriage with his presence; yet he chose the severity of a virgin life, and never knew the nuptial bed; and though at the same time he supplied the want of wine with a miracle, yet he would not work one for the relief of his own hunger in the wilderness: so gracious and divine was the temper of his soul, in allowing to oth-

ers such lawful gratifications as himself thought good to abstain from, and supplying not only their more extreme and pressing necessities, but also their smaller and less considerable wants. We many times hear of our Saviour's sighs, and groans, and tears; but never that he laughed, and but once that he rejoiced in spirit; so that through his whole life he did exactly answer that character given of him by the prophet of old, that he was *a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.* Nor were the troubles and disaccommodations of his life other than matters of choice. For never did there any appear on the stage of the world with greater advantage to have raised himself to the highest secular felicity. He who could bring together such a prodigious number of fishes into his disciples' net, and, at another time, receive that tribute from a fish which he was to pay to the temple, might easily have made himself the richest person in the world. Nay, without any money he could have maintained an army powerful enough to have jostled *Cesar* out of his throne; having oftener than once fed several thousands with a few loaves and small fishes. But, to show how small esteem he had of all the enjoyments in the world, he chose to live in so poor and mean a condition, that *though the foxes had holes, and the birds of the air had nests, yet he who was lord and heir of all things, had not whereon to lay his head.* He did not frequent the courts of princes, nor affect the acquaintance or converse of great ones; but, being reputed the son of a carpenter, he had fishermen and such other poor people for his companions, and lived at such a rate as suited with the meanness of that condition.

Our Saviour's humility.

And thus I am brought unawares to speak of his *humility*, the last branch of the divine life; wherein he was a most eminent pattern to us, that we might *learn of him to be meek and lowly in heart.* I shall not now speak of that infinite condescension of the eternal Son of God, in taking our nature upon him; but only reflect on our Saviour's lowly and humble deportment

while he was in the world. He had none of those sins and imperfections which may justly humble the best of men; but he was so entirely swallowed up with a deep sense of the infinite perfections of God, that he appeared as nothing in his own eyes, I mean, so far as he was a creature. He considered those eminent perfections which shined in his blessed soul, as not his own, but the gifts of God; and therefore assumed nothing to himself for them, but with the profoundest humility renounced all pretences to them. Hence did he refuse that ordinary compellation of *good master*, when addressed to his human nature, by one whom it seems was ignorant of his divinity: *Why callest thou me good? there is none good, but God only:* As if he had said, The goodness of any creature (and such only thou takest me to be) is not worthy to be named or taken notice of; it is God alone who is originally and essentially good. He never made use of his miraculous power for vanity or ostentation. He would not gratify the curiosity of the Jews with a sign from heaven, some prodigious appearance in the air: nor would he follow the advice of his countrymen and kindred, who would have had all his great works performed in the eyes of the world, for gaining him the greater fame. But when his charity had prompted him to the relief of the miserable, his humility made him many times enjoin the concealment of the miracle; and when the glory of God, and the design for which he came into the world, required the publication of them, he ascribed the honour of all to his Father, telling them, *that of himself he was able to do nothing.*

I cannot insist on all the instances of humility in his deportment towards men; his withdrawing himself when they would have made him a king, his subjection, not only to his blessed mother, but to her husband, during his younger years; and his submission to all the indignities and affronts which his rude and malicious enemies did put upon him. The history of his holy life, recorded by those who conversed with him, is full of such passages as these. And indeed the serious and attentive study of it, is the best way to get right measures of hu

mility, and all the other parts of religion which I have been endeavouring to describe.

But now, that I may lessen your trouble of reading a long letter, by making some pauses in it, let me here subjoin a prayer that might be proper when one who had formerly entertained some false notions of religion, begins to discover what it is.

A PRAYER.

'INFINITE and eternal Majesty, author and fountain of being and blessedness, how little do we poor sinful creatures know of thee, or the way to serve and please thee! We talk of religion, and pretend unto it; but alas! how few are there that know and consider what it means! How easily do we mistake the affections of our nature, and the issues of self-love for those divine graces which alone can render us acceptable in thy sight! It may justly grieve me, to consider, that I should have wandered so long, and contented myself so often with vain shadows and false images of piety and religion: yet I cannot but acknowledge and adore thy goodness, who hast been pleased in some measure to open mine eyes, and let me see what it is at which I ought to aim. I rejoice to consider what mighty improvements my nature is capable of, and what a divine temper of spirit doth shine in those whom thou art pleased to choose, and causest to approach unto thee. Blessed be thine infinite mercy, who sentest thine own Son to dwell among men, and to instruct them by his example as well as his laws, giving them a perfect pattern of what they ought to be. O that the holy life of the blessed Jesus may be always in my thoughts, and before mine eyes, till I receive a deep sense and impression of those excellent graces that shined so eminently in him; and let me never cease my endeavours, till that new and divine nature prevail in my soul and Christ be formed within me.'

The excellency and advantage of religion.

AND now, my dear friend, having discovered the nature of true religion, before I proceed any further, it

will not perhaps be unfit to fix our meditations a little on the excellency and advantages of it; that we may be excited to the more vigorous and diligent prosecution of those methods whereby we may attain so great a felicity. But alas! what words shall we find to express that inward satisfaction, those hidden pleasures which can never be rightly understood, but by those holy souls who feel them? *A stranger intermeddleth not with their joy.* Holiness is the right temper, the vigorous and healthful constitution of the soul. Its faculties had formerly been enfeebled and disordered, so that they could not exercise their natural functions; it had wearied itself with endless tossings and rollings, and was never able to find any rest: now, that distemper being removed, it feels itself well; there is a due harmony in its faculties, and a sprightly vigour possesseth every part. The understanding can discern what is good, and the will can cleave unto it: the affections are not tied to the motions of sense, and the influence of external objects; but they are stirred by more divine impressions, are touched by a sense of invisible things.

The excellency of divine love.

Let us descend, if you please, into a nearer and more particular view of religion, in those several branches of it which were named before. Let us consider that love and affection wherewith holy souls are united to God, that we may see what excellency and felicity is involved in it. Love is that powerful and prevalent passion, by which all the faculties and inclinations of the soul are determined, and on which both its perfection and happiness depend. The worth and excellency of a soul is to be measured by the object of its love. He who loveth mean and sordid things, doth thereby become base and vile; but a noble and well-placed affection, doth advance and improve the spirit into a conformity with the perfections which it loves. The images of these do frequently present themselves unto the mind, and, by a secret force and energy, insinuate into the very constitution of the soul, and mould and fashion it unto their

own likeness. Hence we may see how easily lovers or friends do slide into the imitation of the persons whom they affect, and how, even before they are aware, they begin to resemble them, not only in the more considerable instances of their deportment, but also in their voice and gesture, and that which we call their mein and air. And certainly we should as well transcribe the virtues and inward beauties of the soul, if they were the object and motive of our love. But now, as all the creatures we converse with have their mixture and alloy, we are always in hazard to be sullied and corrupted by placing our affections on them. Passion doth easily blind our eyes, so that we first approve, and then imitate the things that are blameable in them. The true way to improve and ennoble our souls, is, by fixing our love on the divine perfections, that we may have them always before us, and derive an impression of them on ourselves, and *beholding with open face, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, we may be changed into the same image, from glory to glory.* He who with a generous and holy ambition hath raised his eyes towards that uncreated beauty and goodness, and fixed his affection there, is quite of another spirit, of a more excellent and heroic temper than the rest of the world; and cannot but infinitely disdain all mean and unworthy things; will not entertain any low or base thoughts which might disparage his high and noble pretensions. Love is the greatest and most excellent thing we are masters of; and therefore it is folly and baseness to bestow it unworthily. It is indeed the only thing we can call our own. Other things may be taken from us by violence; but none can ravish our love. If any thing else be counted ours, by giving our love we give all, so far as we make over our hearts and wills, by which we possess our other enjoyments. It is not possible to refuse him any thing, to whom by love we have given ourselves. Nay, since it is the privilege of gifts to receive their value from the mind of the giver, and not to be measured by the event, but by the desire; he who loveth may in some sense be said not only to bestow all that he hath, but all things

else which may make the beloved person happy, since he doth heartily wish them, and would readily give them, if they were in his power. In which sense it is that one makes bold to say, *That divine love doth in a manner give God unto himself, by the complacency it takes in the happiness and perfection of his nature.* But though this may seem too strained an expression, certainly love is the worthiest present we can offer unto God; and it is extremely debased when we bestow it another way.

When this affection is misplaced, it doth often vent itself in such expressions as point at its genuine and proper object, and insinuate where it ought to be placed. The flattering and blasphemous terms of adoration, wherein men do sometimes express their passion, are the language of that affection which was made and designed for God; as he who is accustomed to speak to some great person, doth, perhaps, unawares, accost another with those titles he was wont to give to him. But certainly that passion which accounteth its object a Deity, ought to be bestowed on him who really is so. Those unlimited submissions, which would debase the soul if directed to any other, will exalt and ennoble it when placed here. Those chains and cords of love are infinitely more glorious than liberty itself; this slavery is more noble than all the empires in the world.

The advantages of divine love.

Again, as divine love doth advance and elevate the soul, so it is that alone which can make it happy. The highest and most ravishing pleasures, the most solid and substantial delights, that human nature is capable of, are those which arise from the endearments of a well-placed and successful affection. That which imbitters love, and makes it ordinarily a very troublesome and hurtful passion, is the placing it on those who have not worth enough to deserve it, or affection and gratitude to require it, or whose absence may deprive us of the pleasure of their converse, or their miseries occasion our

and separation from those we love. It is not without a sensible affliction that friends do part, though for some little time. It is sad to be deprived of that society which is so delightful; our life becomes tedious, being spent in an impatient expectation of the happy hour wherein we may meet again. But if death hath made the separation, as sometime or other it must, this occasions a grief scarce to be paralleled by all the misfortunes of human life, and wherein we pay dear enough for the comforts of our friendship. But O how happy are those who have placed their love on him who can never be absent from them! They need but open their eyes, and they shall every where behold the traces of his presence and glory, and converse with him whom their soul loveth. And this makes the darkest prison, or the wildest desert, not only supportable, but delightful to them.

The divine love makes us partake of an infinite happiness.

In fine, a lover is miserable if the person whom he loveth be so. They who have made an exchange of hearts by love, get thereby an interest in one another's happiness and misery: and this makes love a troublesome passion when placed on earth. The most fortunate person hath grief enough to mar the tranquillity of his friend; and it is hard to hold out, when we are attacked on all hands, and suffer not only in our own person but in another's. But if God were the object of our love, we should share in an infinite happiness, without any mixture or possibility of diminution; we should rejoice to behold the glory of God, and receive comfort and pleasure from all the praises wherewith men and angels do extol him. It should delight us beyond all expression, to consider, that the beloved of our souls is infinitely happy in himself, and that all his enemies cannot shake or unsettle his throne; *that our God is in the heavens, and doth whatsoever he pleaseth.*

Behold, on what sure foundations his happiness is built, whose soul is possessed with divine love; whose will is

transformed into the will of God, and whose greatest desire is, that his maker should be pleased. O the peace, the rest, the satisfaction that attendeth such a temper of mind!

He that loveth God finds sweetness in every dispensation.

What an infinite pleasure must it needs be, thus, as it were, to lose ourselves in him, and, being swallowed up in the overcoming sense of his goodness, to offer ourselves a living sacrifice, always ascending unto him in flames of love! Never doth a soul know what solid joy and substantial pleasure is, till, once being weary of itself, it renounces all property, gives itself up to the author of its being, and feels itself become a hallowed and devoted thing; and can say, from an inward sense and feeling, *My beloved is mine*, (I account all his interest mine own) *and I am his:* I am content to be any thing for him, and care not for myself, but that I may serve him. A person moulded into this temper, would find pleasure in all the dispensations of providence. Temporal enjoyments would have another relish, when he should taste the divine goodness in them, and consider them as tokens of love sent by his dearest Lord and master. And chastisements, though they be not joyous but grievous, would hereby lose their sting: the rod as well as the staff would comfort him: he would snatch a kiss from the hand that was smiting him, and gather sweetness from that severity. Nay, he would rejoice, that though God did not the will of such a worthless and foolish creature as himself, yet he did his own will, and accomplished his own designs, which are infinitely more holy and wise.

The duties of Religion are delightful to him.

The exercises of religion, which to others are insipid and tedious, do yield the highest pleasure and delight to souls possessed with divine love. They rejoice when they are called to *go up to the house of the Lord*, that they may *see his power and his glory, as they*

have formerly seen it in his sanctuary. They never think themselves so happy as when, having retired from the world, and gotten free from the noise and hurry of affairs, and silenced all their clamorous passions, (those troublesome guests within,) they have placed themselves in the presence of God, and entertain fellowship and communion with him. They delight to adore his perfections, and recount his favours, and to protest their affection to him, and tell him a thousand times that they love him; to lay out their troubles or wants before him, and disburden their hearts in his bosom. Repentance itself is a delightful exercise, when it floweth from the principle of love: there is a secret sweetness which accompanieth those tears of remorse, those meltings and relentings of a soul returning unto God, and lamenting its former unkindness.

The severities of a holy life, and that constant watch which we are obliged to keep over our hearts and ways, are very troublesome to those who are overruled and acted by an external law, and have no law in their minds inclining them to the performance of their duty. But where divine love possesseth the soul, it stands as sentinel to keep out every thing that may offend the beloved, and doth disdainfully repulse those temptations which assault it. It complieth cheerfully, not only with explicit commands, but with the most secret notices of the beloved's pleasure; and is ingenious in discovering what will be most grateful and acceptable unto him. It makes mortification and self-denial change their harsh and dreadful names, and become easy, sweet and delightful things.

But I find this part of my letter swell bigger than I designed: indeed who would not be tempted to dwell on so pleasant a theme? I shall endeavour to compensate it by brevity in the other points.

The excellency of charity.

The next branch of the divine life is an universal charity and love. The excellency of this grace will be easily acknowledged. For what can be more noble and gener-

ous than a heart enlarged to embrace the whole world, whose wishes and designs are levelled at the good and welfare of the universe, which considereth every man's interest as its own? He who loveth his neighbour as himself can never entertain any base or injurious thought, or be wanting in expressions of bounty: he had rather suffer a thousand wrongs, than be guilty of one; and never accounts himself happy, but when some one or other hath been benefited by him. The malice or ingratitude of men is not able to resist his love: he overlooks their injuries, and pities their folly, and overcomes their evil with good; and never designs any other revenge against his most bitter and malicious enemies, than to put all the obligations he can upon them, whether they will or not. Is it any wonder that such a person be reverenced and admired, and accounted the darling of mankind? This inward goodness and benignity of spirit reflects a certain sweetness and serenity upon the very countenance, and makes it amiable and lovely. It inspireth the soul with a noble resolution and courage, and makes it capable of enterprising and effecting the highest things. Those heroic actions which we are wont to read with admiration, have for the most part been the effects of the love of one's country, or of particular friendships; and certainly a more extensive and universal affection must be much more powerful and efficacious.

The pleasure that attends charity.

Again, as charity flows from a noble and excellent temper, so it is accompanied with the greatest satisfaction and pleasure. It delights the soul to feel itself thus enlarged, and to be delivered from those disquieting as well as deformed passions, malice, hatred, and envy; and become gentle, sweet, and benign. Had I my choice of all things that might tend to my present felicity, I would pitch upon this, to have my heart possessed with the greatest kindness and affection towards all men in the world. I am sure this would make me partake in all the happiness of others; their inward endowments, and outward prosperity: every thing that did

benefit and advantage them, would afford me comfort and pleasure. And though I should frequently meet with occasions of grief and compassion, yet there is a sweetness in commiseration, which makes it infinitely more desirable than a stupid insensibility: and the consideration of that infinite goodness and wisdom which governs the world, might repress any excessive trouble for particular calamities that happen in it: and the hopes or possibility of men's after-happiness, might moderate their sorrow for their present misfortunes. Certainly, next to the love and enjoyment of God, that ardent charity and affection wherewith blessed souls do embrace one another, is justly to be reckoned as the greatest felicity of those regions above: and did it universally prevail in the world, it would anticipate that blessedness, and make us taste of the joys of heaven upon earth.

The excellency of purity.

That which I named as a third branch of religion, was purity: and you may remember I described it to consist in a contempt of sensual pleasures, and resoluteness to undergo those troubles and pains we may meet with in the performance of our duty. Now, the naming of this may suffice to recommend it as a most noble and excellent quality. There is no slavery so base, as that whereby a man becomes a drudge to his own lusts; nor any victory so glorious, as that which is obtained over them. Never can that person be capable of any thing that is noble and worthy, who is sunk in the gross and feculent pleasures of sense, or bewitched with the light and airy gratifications of fancy. But the religious soul is of a more sublime and divine temper; it knows it was made for higher things, and scorns to step aside one foot out of the way of holiness, for the obtaining any of these.

The delight afforded by purity.

And this purity is accompanied with a great deal of pleasure: whatsoever defiles the soul disturbs it too; all impure delights have a sting in them, and leave smart

and trouble behind them. Excess and intemperance, and all inordinate lusts, are so much enemies to the health of the body, and the interests of this present life, that a little consideration might oblige any rational man to forbear them on that very score: and if the religious person go higher, and do not only abstain from noxious pleasures, but neglect those that are innocent, this is not to be looked upon as any violent and uneasy restraint, but as the effect of better choice, that their minds are taken up in the pursuit of more sublime and refined delights, so that they cannot be concerned in these. Any person that is engaged in a violent and passionate affection, will easily forget his ordinary gratifications, will be little curious about his diet, or his bodily ease, or the divertisements he was wont to delight in. No wonder then if souls overpowered with divine love, despise inferior pleasures, and be almost ready to grudge the body its necessary attendance for the common accommodations of life, judging all these impertinent to their main happiness, and those higher enjoyments they are pursuing. As for the hardships they meet with, they rejoice in them, as opportunities to exercise and testify their affection: and since they are able to do so little for God, they are glad of the honour to suffer for him.

The excellency of humility.

The last branch of religion is *humility;* and however to vulgar and carnal eyes this may appear an abject, base, and despicable quality, yet really the soul of man is not capable of a higher and more noble endowment. It is a silly ignorance that begets pride: but humility arises from a nearer acquaintance with excellent things, which keeps men from doating on trifles, or admiring themselves because of some pretty attainments. Noble and well educated souls have no such high opinion of riches, beauty, strength, and other such like advantages, as to value themselves for them, or despise those that want them: and as for inward worth and real goodness, the sense they have of the divine perfections makes them think very

meanly of any thing they have hitherto attained, and be still endeavouring to surmount themselves, and make nearer approaches to those infinite excellencies which they admire.

I know not what thoughts people may have of humility, but I see almost every person pretending to it, and shunning such expressions and actions as may make them be accounted arrogant and presumptuous; so that those who are most desirous of praise, will be loth to commend themselves. What are all those compliments and modes of civility, so frequent in our ordinary converse, but so many protestations of the esteem of others, and the low thoughts we have of ourselves; and must not that humility be a noble and excellent endowment, when the very shadows of it are accounted so necessary a part of good breeding?

The pleasure and sweetness of an humble temper.

Again, this grace, is accompanied with a great deal of happiness and tranquillity: the proud and arrogant person is a trouble to all that converse with him, but most of all unto himself; every thing is enough to vex him; but scarce any thing is sufficient to content and please him. He is ready to quarrel with every thing that falls out, as if he himself were such a considerable person, that God Almighty should do every thing to gratify him, and all the creatures of heaven and earth should wait upon him, and obey his will. The leaves of high trees do shake with every blast of wind: and every breath, every evil word will disquiet and torment an arrogant man: but the humble person hath the advantage when he is despised, that none can think more meanly of him than he doth of himself; and therefore he is not troubled at the matter, but can easily bear those reproaches which wound the other to the soul. And withal, as he is less affected with injuries, so indeed he is less obnoxious unto them: *contention, which cometh of pride*, betrays a man into a thousand inconveniences, which those of a meek and lowly temper seldom meet with. True and genuine humility beget-

teth both a veneration and love among all wise and discerning persons; while pride defeateth its own design, and depriveth a man of that honour it makes him pretend to.

But as the chief exercises of humility are those which relate unto Almighty God, so these are accompanied with the greatest satisfaction and sweetness. It is impossible to express the great pleasure and delight which religious persons feel in the lowest prostration of their souls before God, when, having a deep sense of the divine majesty and glory, they sink (if I may so speak) to the bottom of their beings, and vanish and disappear in the presence of God, by a serious and affectionate acknowledgment of their own nothingness, and the shortness and imperfections of their attainments; when they understand the full sense and emphasis of the Psalmist's exclamation, *Lord, what is man!* and can utter it with the same affection. Never did any haughty and ambitious person receive the praises and applauses of men with so much pleasure, as the humble and religious do renounce them: *Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name, give glory, &c.*

Thus have I spoken something of the excellencies and advantage of religion in its several branches; but should be very injurious to the subject, did I pretend to have given any perfect account of it. Let us acquaint ourselves with it, my dear friend; let us acquaint ourselves with it, and experience will teach us more than all that ever hath been spoken or written concerning it. But if we may suppose the soul to be already awakened unto some longing desires after so great a blessedness, it will be good to give them vent and suffer them to issue forth in some such aspirations as these:

A PRAYER.

'Good God! what a mighty felicity is this to which we are called! How graciously hast thou joined our duty and happiness together; and prescribed that for our work, the performance whereof is a great reward! And shall such silly worms be advanced to so great a height? Wilt

thou allow us to raise our eyes to thee? Wilt thou admit and accept our affection? Shall we receive the impression of thy divine excellencies, by beholding and admiring them, and partake of thy infinite blessedness and glory, by loving thee, and rejoicing in them? O the happiness of those souls that have broken the fetters of self-love, and disentangled their affection from every narrow and particular good; whose understandings are enlightened by the Holy Spirit, and their wills enlarged to the extent of thine; who love thee above all things, and all mankind for thy sake! I am persuaded, O God! I am persuaded, that I can never be happy, till my carnal and corrupt affections be mortified, and the pride and vanity of my spirit be subdued, and till I come seriously to despise the world, and think nothing of myself. But O when shall it once be! O when wilt thou come unto me, and satisfy my soul with thy likeness, making me holy as thou art holy, even in all manner of conversation! Hast thou given me a prospect of so great a felicity, and wilt thou not bring me unto it? Hast thou excited these desires in my soul, and wilt thou not also satisfy them? O teach me to do thy will, for thou art my God; thy spirit is good, lead me unto the land of uprightness. Quicken me, O Lord, for thy name's sake, and perfect that which concerneth me. Thy mercy, O Lord, endureth for ever; forsake not the work of thine own hands.'

The despondent thoughts of some newly awakened to a right sense of things.

I HAVE hitherto considered wherein true religion doth consist, and how desirable a thing it is. But when one sees how infinitely distant the common temper and frame of men are from it, he may perhaps be ready to despond and give over, and think it utterly impossible to be attained. He may sit down in sadness, and bemoan himself, and say, in the anguish and bitterness of his spirit, "They are happy indeed whose souls are

awakened unto the divine life, who are thus renewed in the spirit of their minds. But, alas! I am quite of another constitution, and am not able to effect so mighty a change. If outward observances could have done the business, I might have hoped to acquit myself by diligence and care: but since nothing but a new nature can serve the turn, what am I able to do? I could bestow all my goods in oblations to God, or alms to the poor; but cannot command that love and charity, without which this expense would profit me nothing. This gift of God cannot be purchased with money. If a man should give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned. I could pine and macerate my body, and undergo many hardships and troubles; but I cannot get all my corruptions starved, nor my affections wholly weaned from earthly things: there are still some worldly desires lurking in my heart; and those vanities that I have shut out of the doors, are always getting in by the windows. I am many times convinced of my own meanness, of the weakness of my body, and the far greater weakness of my soul; but this doth rather beget indignation and discontent, than true humility in my spirit: and though I should come to think meanly of myself, yet I cannot endure that others should think so too. In a word, when I reflect on my highest and most specious attainments, I have reason to suspect, that they are all but the effects of nature, the issues of self-love acting under several disguises: and this principle is so powerful and so deeply rooted in me, that I can never hope to be delivered from the dominion of it. I may toss and turn as a door on the hinges; but can never get clear off, or be quite unhinged of self, which is still the centre of all my motions. So that all the advantage I can draw from the discovery of religion, is but to see at a huge distance that felicity which I am not able to reach; like a man in a shipwreck, who discerns the land, and envies the happiness of those who are there, but thinks it impossible for himself to get ashore."

The unreasonableness of these fears.

These, I say, or such like desponding thoughts, may arise in the minds of those persons who begin to conceive somewhat more of the nature and excellency of religion than before. They have spied the land, and seen that it is exceeding good; that it floweth with milk and honey; but they find they have the children of Anak to grapple with; many powerful lusts and corruptions to overcome, and they fear they shall never prevail against them. But why should we give way to such discouraging suggestions? why should we entertain such unreasonable fears, which damp our spirits, and weaken our hands, and augment the difficulties of our way? Let us encourage ourselves, my dear friend, let us encourage ourselves with those mighty aids we are to expect in this spiritual warfare; for greater is he that is for us, than all that can rise up against us: *The eternal God is our refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms. Let us be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might; for he it is that shall tread down our enemies.* God hath a tender regard unto the souls of men, and is infinitely willing to promote their welfare. He hath condescended to our weakness, and declared with an oath, that he hath no pleasure in our destruction. There is no such thing as despite or envy lodged in the bosom of that ever blessed being, whose name and nature is love. He created us at first in a happy condition; and now, when we are fallen from it, *he hath laid help upon one that is mighty to save*, hath committed the care of our souls to no meaner person than the eternal Son of his love. It is he that is the Captain of our salvation; and what enemies can be too strong for us, when we are fighting under his banner? Did not the Son of God come down from the bosom of his Father, and pitch his tabernacle amongst the sons of men, that he might recover and propagate the divine life, and restore the image of God in their souls? All the mighty works which he performed; all the sad afflictions which he sustained, had this for their scope and design; for this

did he labour and toil; for this did he bleed and die: *Hath he wrought no deliverance in the earth? Shall he not see the travail of his soul?* Certainly it is impossible that this great contrivance of heaven should prove abortive, that such a mighty undertaking should fail and miscarry. It hath already been effectual for the salvation of many thousands, who were once as far from the kingdom of heaven as we can suppose ourselves to be; and our *High Priest continueth for ever, and is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him.* He is tender and compassionate; he knoweth our infirmities, and had experience of our temptations: *A bruised reed will he not break, and smoking flax will he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory.* He hath sent out his Holy Spirit, whose sweet, but powerful breathings are still moving up and down in the world, to quicken and revive the souls of men, and awaken them unto the sense and feeling of those divine things for which they were made; and is ready to assist such weak and languishing creatures as we are, in our essays towards holiness and felicity; and when once it hath taken hold of a soul, and kindled in it the smallest spark of divine love, it will be sure to preserve and cherish, and bring it forth into a flame, which many waters shall not quench, neither shall the floods be able to drown it. Whenever this day begins to dawn, and the *day-star to arise in the heart*, it will easily dispel the powers of darkness, and make ignorance and folly, and all the corrupt and selfish affections of men, flee away as fast before it as the shades of night when the sun cometh out of his chambers: for *the path of the just is as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day. They shall go on from strength to strength, till every one of them appear before God in Zion.*

Why should we think it impossible, that true goodness and universal love should ever come to sway and prevail in our souls? Is not this their primitive state and condition; their native and genuine constitution as they came first from the hands of their maker? Sin and cor-

ruption are but usurpers; and though they have long kept the possession, yet *from the beginning it was not so.* That inordinate self-love which one would think were rooted in our very being, and interwoven with the constitution of our nature, is nevertheless of foreign extraction, and had no place at all in the state of integrity. We have still so much reason left as to condemn it. Our understandings are easily convinced, that we ought to be wholly devoted to him from whom we have our being, and to love him infinitely more than ourselves, who is infinitely better than we; and our wills would readily comply with this, if they were not disordered and put out of tune. And is not he who made our souls, able to rectify and mend them again? Shall we not be able, by his assistance, to vanquish and expel those violent intruders, *and turn to flight the armies of the aliens?*

No sooner shall we take up arms in this holy war, but we shall have all the saints on earth, and all the angels in heaven engaged on our party. The holy church throughout the world is daily interceding with God for the success of all such endeavours. And doubtless those heavenly hosts above are nearly concerned in the interests of religion, and infinitely desirous to see the divine life thriving and prevailing in this inferior world; and that the will of God may be done by us on earth, as it is done by themselves in heaven. And may we not then encourage ourselves, as the prophet did his servant, when he showed him the horses and chariots of fire, *Fear not, for they that be with us, are more than they that be against us.*

We must do what we can, and depend on the divine assistance.

Away then with all perplexing fears and desponding thoughts. To undertake vigorously, and rely confidently on the divine assistance, is more than half the conquest. *Let us arise, and be doing, and the Lord will be with us.* It is true, religion in the souls of men is the immediate work of God; and all our natural

endeavours can neither produce it alone, nor merit those supernatural aids by which it must be wrought: the Holy Ghost must come upon us, and the power of the Highest must overshadow us, before that holy thing can be forgotten, and Christ be formed in us. But yet we must not expect that this whole work should be done without any concurring endeavours of our own: we must not lie loitering in the ditch, and wait till Omnipotence pull us from thence. No, no: we must bestir ourselves, and actuate those powers which we have already received: we must put forth ourselves to our utmost capacities, and then we may hope that *our labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.* All the art and industry of man cannot form the smallest herb, or make a stalk of corn to grow in the field: it is the energy of nature, and the influences of heaven, which produce this effect; it is God *who causes the grass to grow, and herb for the service of man:* and yet nobody will say, that the labours of the husbandman are useless or unnecessary. So likewise the human soul is immediately created by God; it is he who both formeth and enliveneth the child: and yet he hath appointed the marriage-bed as the ordinary means for the propagation of mankind. Though there must intervene a stroke of omnipotence to effect this mighty change in our souls, yet ought we to do what we can to fit and prepare ourselves. For we must break up our fallow ground, and root out the weeds, and pull up the thorns, that so we may be more ready to receive the seeds of grace, and the dew of heaven. It is true, God hath been found of some who sought him not; he hath cast himself in their way, who were quite out of his; he hath laid hold upon them, and stopped their course of a sudden: for so was St. Paul converted in his journey to Damascus. But certainly this is not God's ordinary method of dealing with men. Though he hath not tied himself to means, yet he hath tied us to the use of them; and we have never more reason to expect the divine assistance, than when we are doing our utmost endeavours. It shall therefore be my next work, to show what course we ought to take for

attaining that blessed temper I have hitherto described. But here, if, in delivering my own thoughts, I shall chance to differ from what is or may be said by others in this matter, I would not be thought to contradict and oppose them, more than physicians do, when they prescribe several remedies for the same disease, which perhaps are all useful and good. Every one may propose the method he judges most proper and convenient; but he doth not thereby pretend that the cure can never be effected, unless that be exactly observed. I doubt it hath occasioned much unnecessary disquietude to some holy persons, that they have not found such a regular and orderly transaction in their souls, as they have seen described in books: that they have not passed through all those steps and stages of conversion, which some (who perhaps have felt them in themselves) have too peremptorily prescribed unto others. God hath several ways of dealing with the souls of men; and it sufficeth if the work be accomplished, whatever the methods have been.

Again, though, in proposing directions, I must follow that order which the nature of things shall lead to; yet I do not mean that the same method should be so punctually observed in the practice, as if the latter rules were never to be heeded, till some considerable time have been spent in practising the former. The directions I intend are mutually conducive one to another; and are all to be performed as occasion shall serve, and we find ourselves enabled to perform them.

We must shun all manner of sin.

But now, that I may detain you no longer, if we desire to have our souls moulded to this holy frame, to become partakers of the divine nature, and have Christ formed in our hearts, we must seriously resolve, and carefully endeavour to avoid and abandon all vicious and sinful practices. There can be no treaty of peace, till once we lay down these weapons of rebellion wherewith we fight against heaven: nor can we expect to have our distempers cured, if we be daily feeding on poison. Every

wilful sin gives a mortal wound to the soul, and puts it at a greater distance from God and goodness: and we can never hope to have our hearts purified from corrupt affections, unless we cleanse our hands from vicious actions. Now, in this case, we cannot excuse ourselves by the pretence of impossibility; for sure our outward man is some way in our power; we have some command of our feet, and hands, and tongue, nay, and of our thoughts and fancies too; at least so far as to divert them from impure and sinful objects, and to turn our mind another way: and we should find this power and authority much strengthened and advanced, if we were careful to manage and exercise it. In the mean while, I acknowledge our corruptions are so strong, and our temptations so many, that it will require a great deal of stedfastness and resolution, of watchfulness and care, to preserve ourselves, even in this degree of innocence and purity.

We must know what things are sinful.

And, first, let us inform ourselves well, what those sins are from which we ought to abstain. And here we must not take our measures from the maxims of the world, or the practices of those whom in charity we account good men. Most people have very light apprehensions of these things, and are not sensible of any fault, unless it be gross and flagitious; and scarce reckon any so great as that which they call preciseness: and those who are more serious, do many times allow themselves too great latitude and freedom. Alas! how much pride and vanity, and passion and humour; how much weakness, folly, and sin, doth every day show itself in their converse and behaviour. It may be they are humbled for it, and striving against it, and are daily gaining some ground; but then the progress is so small, and their failings so many, that we have need to choose an exacter pattern. Every one of us must answer for himself, and the practices of others will never warrant and secure us. It is the highest folly to regulate our actions by any other standard than that by which they must be judged.

If ever we would *cleanse our way*, it must be *by taking heed thereunto according to the word of God.* And that *word which is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart*, will certainly discover many things to be sinful and heinous, which pass for very innocent in the eyes of the world: let us therefore imitate the Psalmist, who saith, Concerning the works of men, *by the words of thy lips, I have kept myself from the paths of the destroyer.* Let us acquaint ourselves with the strict and holy laws of our religion; let us consider the discourses of our blessed Saviour, (especially that divine sermon on the mount,) and the writings of his holy apostles, where an ingenious and unbiassed mind may clearly discern those limits and bounds by which our actions ought to be confined. And then let us never look upon any sin as light and inconsiderable; but be fully persuaded that the smallest is infinitely heinous in the sight of God, and prejudicial to the souls of men; and that, if we had a right sense of things, we should be as deeply affected with the least irregularities, as now we are with the highest crimes.

We must resist the temptations of sin, by considering the evils they will draw on us.

But now, amongst those things which we discover to be sinful, there will be some, unto which, through the disposition of our nature, or long custom, or the endearments of pleasure, we are so much wedded, that it will be like cutting off the right hand, or pulling out the right eye, to abandon them. But must we therefore sit down and wait till all difficulties are over, and every temptation be gone? This were to imitate the fool in the poet, who stood the whole day at the river side, till all the waters should run by. We must not indulge our inclinations, as we do little children, till they grow weary of the thing they are unwilling to let go; we must not continue

our sinful practices, in hopes that the divine grace will one day overpower our spirits, and make us hate them for their own deformity.

Let us suppose the worst, that we are utterly destitute of any supernatural principle, and want that taste by which we should discern and abhor perverse things: yet sure we are capable of some considerations which may be of force to persuade us to this reformation of our lives. If the inward deformity and heinous nature of sin cannot affect us, at least we may be frighted by those dreadful consequences that attend it: that same selfish principle which pusheth us forward unto the pursuit of sinful pleasures, will make us loth to buy them at the rate of everlasting misery. Thus we may encounter self-love with its own weapons, and employ one natural inclination for repressing the exorbitances of another. Let us therefore accustom ourselves to consider seriously, what a fearful thing it must needs be to irritate and offend that infinite Being, on whom we hang and depend every moment; who needs but to withdraw his mercies to make us miserable, or his assistance to make us nothing. Let us frequently remember the shortness and uncertainty of our lives, and how that, after we have taken a few turns more in the world, and conversed a little longer amongst men, we must all go down into the dark and silent grave, and carry nothing along with us but anguish and regret for all our sinful enjoyments; and then think what horror must needs seize the guilty soul, to find itself naked and all alone before the severe and impartial judge of the world, to render an exact account, not only of its more important and considerable transactions, but of every word that the tongue hath uttered, and the swiftest and most secret thought that ever passed through the mind. Let us sometimes represent unto ourselves the terrors of that dreadful day, when the foundations of the earth shall be shaken, and the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, and the present frame of nature be dissolved, and our eyes shall see the blessed Jesus (who came once into the world in all humility to

visit us, to purchase pardon for us, and beseech us to accept of it) now appearing in the majesty of his glory, and descending from heaven in flaming fire, to take vengeance on those that have despised his mercy, and persisted in rebellion against him: when all the hidden things of darkness shall be brought to light, and the counsels of the heart shall be made manifest: when those secret impurities and subtle frauds whereof the world did never suspect us, shall be exposed and laid open to public view, and many thousand actions which we never dreamed to be sinful, or else had altogether forgotten, shall be charged home to our consciences, with such evident convictions of guilt, that we shall neither be able to deny nor excuse them. Then shall the angels in heaven, and all the saints that ever lived on the earth, approve that dreadful sentence which shall be passed on wicked men; and those who perhaps did love and esteem them when they lived in the world, shall look upon them with indignation and abhorrence, and never make one request for their deliverance. Let us consider the eternal punishment of damned souls, which are shadowed forth in scripture by metaphors taken from those things that are most terrible and grievous in the world, and yet all do not suffice to convey unto our minds any full apprehensions of them. When we have joined together the importance of all these expressions, and added unto them whatever our fancy can conceive of misery and torment, we must still remember, that all this comes infinitely short of the truth and reality of the thing.

It is true, this is a sad and melancholy subject; there is anguish and horror in the consideration of it; but sure it must be infinitely more dreadful to endure it: and such thoughts as these may be very useful to fright us from the courses that would lead us thither; how fond soever we may be of sinful pleasures, the fear of hell would make us abstain: our most forward inclinations will startle and give back, when pressed with that question in the prophet, *Who among us can dwell with everlasting burnings?*

To this very purpose it is, that the terrors of another world are so frequently represented in holy writ, and that in such terms as are most proper to affect and influence a carnal mind: these fears can never suffice to make any person truly good, but certainly they may restrain us from much evil, and have often made way for more ingenuous and kindly impressions.

We must keep a constant watch over ourselves.

But it will not suffice to consider these things once and again, nor to form some resolutions of abandoning our sins, unless we maintain a constant guard, and be continually watching against them. Sometimes the mind is awakened to see the dismal consequences of a vicious life, and straight we are resolved to reform: but, alas! it presently falleth asleep, and we lose that prospect which we had of things, and then temptations take the advantage; they solicit and importune us continually, and so do frequently engage our consent before we are aware. It is the folly and ruin of most people to live at adventure, and take part in every thing that comes in their way, seldom considering what they are about to say or do. If we would have our resolutions take effect, we must take heed unto our ways, and set a watch before the door of our lips, and examine the motions that arise in our hearts, and cause them to tell us whence they come, and whither they go; whether it be pride or passion, or any corrupt and vicious humour, that prompteth us to any design; and whether God will be offended, or any body harmed by it. And if we have no time for long reasonings, let us at least turn our eyes toward God, and place ourselves in his presence, to ask his leave and approbation for what we do: let us consider ourselves under the all-seeing eye of that divine Majesty, as in the midst of an infinite globe of light, which compasseth us about both behind and before, and pierceth to the innermost corners of our soul. The sense and remembrance of the divine presence is the most ready and effectual means, both to discover what is unlawful, and to restrain us from it. There are some

things a person could make shift to palliate or defend, and yet he dares not look almighty God in the face, and adventure upon them. If we look unto him, we shall be lightened; if we *set him always before us*, he will *guide us by his eye, and instruct us in the way wherein we ought to walk.*

We must often examine our actions.

This care and watchfulness over our actions, must be seconded by frequent and serious reflections upon them, not only that we may obtain the divine mercy and pardon for our sins, by an humble and sorrowful acknowledgement of them; but also that we may re-enforce and strengthen our resolutions, and learn to decline or resist the temptations by which we have been formerly foiled. It is an advice worthy of a Christian, though it did first drop from a heathen pen, " That before we betake ourselves to rest, we renew and examine all the passages of the day, that we may have the comfort of what we have done aright, and may redress what we find to have been amiss, and make the shipwrecks of one day be as marks to direct our course in another." This may be called the very art of virtuous living, and would contribute wonderfully to advance our reformation, and preserve our innocency. But, withal, we must not forget to implore the divine assistance, especially against those sins that do most easily beset us: and though it be supposed that our hearts are not yet moulded into that spiritual frame which should render our devotions acceptable, yet, methinks, such considerations as have been proposed to deter us from sin, may also stir us up to some natural seriousness, and make our prayers against it as earnest, at least, as they are wont to be against other calamities: and I doubt not but God, who heareth the cry of the ravens, will have some regard even to such petitions as proceed from those natural passions which himself hath implanted in us. Besides, that those prayers against sin, will be powerful engagements on ourselves to excite us to watchfulness and care; and common ingenuity will make us ashamed to relapse into

those faults, which we have lately bewailed before God, and against which we have begged his assistance.

It is fit to restrain ourselves in many lawful things.

Thus are we to make the first essay for recovering the divine life, by restraining the natural inclinations, that they break not out into sinful practices: but now I must add, that Christian prudence will teach us to abstain from gratifications that are not simply unlawful, and that not only that we may secure our innocence, which would be in continual hazard if we should strain our liberty to the utmost point; but also, that hereby we may weaken the forces of nature, and teach our appetites to obey. We must do with ourselves as prudent parents with their children, who cross their wills in many little indifferent things, to make them manageable and submissive in more considerable instances. He who would mortify the pride and vanity of his spirit, should stop his ears to the most deserved praises; and sometimes forbear his just vindication from the censures and aspersions of others, especially if they reflect only upon his prudence and conduct, and not on his virtue and innocence. He who would check a revengeful humour, would do well to deny himself the satisfaction of representing unto others the injuries which he hath sustained; and if we would so take heed to our ways, that we sin not with our tongue, we must accustom ourselves much to solitude and silence, and sometimes, with the Psalmist, *Hold our peace even from good*, till once we have gotten some command over that unruly member. Thus, I say, we may bind up our natural inclinations, and make our appetites more moderate in their cravings, by accustoming them to frequent refusals: but it is not enough to have them under violence and restraint.

We must strive to put ourselves out of love with the world.

Our next essay must be to wean our affections from created things, and all the delights and entertainments of the lower life, which sink and depress the souls

of men, and retard their motions towards God and heaven; and this we must do by possessing our minds with a deep persuasion of the vanity and emptiness of worldly enjoyments. This is an ordinary theme, and every body can make declamations upon it; but alas! how few understand and believe what they say! These notions float in our brains, and come sliding off our tongues, but we have no deep impression of them on our spirits, we feel not the truth which we pretend to believe. We can tell that all the glory and splendour, all the pleasures and enjoyments of the world, are vanity and nothing; and yet these nothings take up all our thoughts, and engross all our affections; they stifle the better inclinations of our soul, and inveigle us into many a sin. It may be, in a sober mood, we give them the slight, and resolve to be no longer deluded with them; but these thoughts seldom outlive the next temptation; the vanities which we have shut out at the door get in at a postern: there are still some pretensions, some hopes that flatter us; and after we have been frustrated a thousand times, we must be continually repeating the experiment: the least difference of circumstances is enough to delude us, and make us expect that satisfaction in one thing which we have missed in another: but could we once get clearly off, and come to a real and serious contempt of worldly things, this were a very considerable advancement in our way. The soul of man is of a vigorous and active nature, and hath in it a raging and inextinguishable thirst, an immaterial kind of fire, always catching at some object or other, in conjunction wherewith it thinks to be happy; and were it once rent from the world, and all the bewitching enjoyments under the sun, it would quickly search after some higher and more excellent object, to satisfy its ardent and importunate cravings; and being no longer dazzled with glittering vanities, would fix on that supreme and all-sufficient Good, where it would discover such beauty and sweetness, as would charm and overpower all its affections. The love of the world, and the love of

God, are like the scales of a balance; as the one falleth, the other doth rise: when our natural inclinations prosper, and the creature is exalted in our soul, religion is faint, and doth languish; but when earthly objects wither away and lose their beauty, and the soul begins to cool and flag in its prosecution of them, then the seeds of grace take root, and the divine life begins to flourish and prevail. It doth, therefore, nearly concern us, to convince ourselves of the emptiness and vanity of creature-enjoyments, and reason our hearts out of love with them: let us seriously consider all that our reason, or our faith, our own experience, or the observation of others, can suggest to this effect; let us ponder the matter over and over, and fix our thoughts on this truth, till we become really persuaded of it. Amidst all our pursuits and designs, let us stop and ask ourselves, For what end is all this? at what do I aim? can the gross and muddy pleasures of sense, or a heap of white and yellow earth, or the esteem and affection of silly creatures like myself, satisfy a rational and immortal soul? Have I not tried these things already? will they have a higher relish, and yield me more contentment tomorrow than yesterday, or the next year than they did the last? There may be some little difference between that which I am now pursuing, and that which I enjoyed before; but sure my former enjoyments did show as pleasant, and promised as fair, before I attained them: like the rainbow, they looked very glorious at a distance, but when I approached I found nothing but emptiness and vapour. O what a poor thing would the life of man be, if it were capable of no higher enjoyments!

I cannot insist on this subject: and there is the less need, when I remember to whom I am writing. Yes, my dear friend, you have had as great experience of the emptiness and vanity of human things, and have at present as few worldly engagements as any that I know. I have sometimes reflected on those passages of your life wherewith you have been pleased to acquaint me; and methinks, through all, I can discern a design of the divine Providence to wean your affections

from every thing here below. The trials you have had of those things which the world doats upon, have taught you to despise them; and you have found by experience, that neither the endowments of nature, nor the advantages of fortune, are sufficient for happiness; that every rose hath its thorn, and there may be a worm at the root of the fairest gourd; some secret and undiscerned grief, which may make a person deserve the pity of those who perhaps do admire or envy their supposed felicity. If any earthly comforts have got too much of your heart, I think they have been your relations and friends; and the dearest of these are removed out of the world, so that you must raise your mind towards heaven, when you would think upon them. Thus God hath provided that your heart may be loosed from the world, and that he may not have any rival in your affection, which I have always observed to be so large and unbounded, so noble and disinterested, that no inferior object can answer or deserve it.

We must do those outward actions that are commanded.

When we have got our corruptions restrained, and our natural appetites and inclinations towards worldly things in some measure subdued, we must proceed to such exercises as have a more immediate tendency to excite and awaken the divine life: and, first, let us endeavour conscientiously to perform those duties which religion doth require, and whereunto it would incline us, if it did prevail in our souls. If we cannot get our inward disposition presently changed, let us study at least to regulate our outward deportment: if our hearts be not yet inflamed with divine love, let us, however, own our allegiance to that infinite Majesty, by attending his service, and listening to his word, by speaking reverently of his name, and praising his goodness, and exhorting others to serve and obey him. If we want that charity, and those bowels of compassion which we ought to have towards our neighbours, yet

must we not omit any occasion of doing them good: if our hearts be haughty and proud, we must nevertheless study a modest and humble deportment. These external performances are of little value in themselves, yet they may help us forward to better things. The apostle indeed tells us, *that bodily exercise profiteth little;* but he seems not to affirm that it is altogether useless: it is always good to be doing what we can, for then God is wont to pity our weakness, and assist our feeble endeavours; and when true charity and humility, and other graces of the divine Spirit, come to take root in our souls, they will exert themselves more freely, and with less difficulty, if we have before been accustomed to express them in our outward conversations. Nor need we fear the imputation of hypocrisy, though our actions do thus somewhat outrun our affections, seeing they do still proceed from a sense of our duty; and our design is not to appear better than we are, but that we may really become so.

We must endeavour to form internal acts of devotion, charity, &c.

But as inward acts have a more immediate influence on the soul, to mould it to a right temper and frame, so ought we to be most frequent and sedulous in the exercise of them. Let us be often lifting up our hearts toward God; and if we do not say that we love him above all things, let us at least acknowledge that it is our duty, and would be our happiness so to do; let us lament the dishonour done unto him by foolish and sinful men, and applaud the praises and adorations that are given him by that blessed and glorious company above: let us resign and yield ourselves up unto him a thousand times, to be governed by his laws, and disposed of at his pleasure. And though our stubborn hearts should start back and refuse; yet let us tell him we are convinced that his will is always just and good; and therefore desire him to do with us whatsoever he pleaseth, whether we will or not. And so, for begetting in us an universal charity towards men, we must be frequently putting up

wishes for their happiness, and blessing every person that we see; and when we have done any thing for the relief of the miserable, we may second it with earnest desires that God would take care of them, and deliver them out of all their distresses.

Thus should we exercise ourselves unto godliness. And when we are employing the powers that we have, the Spirit of God is wont to strike in, and elevate these acts of our soul beyond the pitch of nature, and give them a divine impression: and, after the frequent reiteration of these, we shall find ourselves more inclined unto them, they flowing with greater freedom and ease.

Consideration a great instrument of religion.

I shall mention but two other means for begetting that holy and divine temper of spirit which is the subject of the present discourse. And the first is, a deep and serious consideration of the truths of our religion, and that both as to the certainty and importance of them. The assent which is ordinarily given to divine truths, is very faint and languid; very weak and ineffectual; flowing only from a blind inclination to follow that religion which is in fashion, or a lazy indifference and unconcernedness whether things be so or not. Men are unwilling to quarrel with the religion of their country, and since all their neighbours are christians, they are content to be so too; but they are seldom at the pains to consider the evidences of those truths, or to ponder the importance and tendency of them; and thence it is that they have so little influence on their affections and practice. Those *spiritless and paralytic thoughts* (as one doth rightly term them) are not able to move the will and direct the hand: we must therefore endeavour to work up our minds to a serious belief and full persuasion of divine truths, unto a sense and feeling of spiritual things. Our thoughts must dwell upon them, till we are both convinced of them, and deeply affected with them. Let us urge forward our spirits, and make them approach the invisible world; and fix our minds upon immaterial

things, till we clearly perceive that these are no dreams; nay, that all things are dreams and shadows besides them. When we look about us and behold the beauty and magnificence of this goodly frame, the order and harmony of the whole creation, let our thoughts from thence take their flight towards that omnipotent wisdom and goodness which did at first produce, and doth still establish and uphold the same. When we reflect upon ourselves, let us consider that we are not a mere piece of organized matter; a curious and well contrived engine; that there is more in us than flesh, and blood, and bones; even a divine spark, capable to know, and love, and enjoy our Maker; and though it be now exceedingly clogged with its dull and lumpish companion, yet ere long it shall be delivered, and can subsist without the body, as well as that can do without the clothes which we throw off at our pleasure. Let us often withdraw our thoughts from this earth, this scene of misery, folly, and sin, and raise them towards that more vast and glorious world, whose innocent and blessed inhabitants solace themselves eternally in the divine presence, and know no other passion but an unmixed joy, and an unbounded love: and then consider how the blessed Son of God came down to this lower world to live among us, and die for us, that he might bring us to a portion of the same felicity; and think how he hath overcome the sharpness of death, and opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers, and is now set down on the *right hand of the Majesty on high;* and yet is not the less mindful of us, but receiveth our prayers, and presenteth them unto his Father; and is daily visiting his church with the influences of his Spirit, as the sun reacheth us with his beams.

To beget divine love, we must consider the excellency of the divine nature.

The serious and frequent consideration of these, and such other divine truths, is the most proper method to beget that lively faith which is the foundation of religion, the spring and root of the divine life. Let me further suggest some particular subjects of meditation for pro-

ducing the several branches of it. And, first, to inflame our souls with the love of God, let us consider the excellency of his nature, and his love and kindness towards us. It is little we know of the divine perfection, and yet that little may suffice to fill our souls with admiration and love; to ravish our affections as well as to raise our wonder: for we are not merely creatures of sense, that we should be incapable of any other affection but that which entereth by the eyes. The character of any excellent person whom we have never seen, will many times engage our hearts, and make us hugely concerned in all his interests. And what is it, I pray you, that engages us so much to those with whom we converse? I cannot think that it is merely the colour of their face, or their comely proportions; for then we should fall in love with statues, and pictures, and flowers. These outward accomplishments may a little delight the eye, but would never be able to prevail so much on the heart, if they did not represent some vital perfection. We either see or apprehend some greatness of mind, or vigour of spirit, or sweetness of disposition; some sprightliness, or wisdom, or goodness, which charm our spirit, and command our love. Now these perfections are not obvious to the sight, the eyes can only discern the signs and effects of them; and if it be the understanding that directs the affection, and vital perfections prevail with it, certainly the excellencies of the divine nature (the traces whereof we cannot but discover in every thing we behold) would not fail to engage our hearts, if we did seriously view and regard them. Shall we not be infinitely more transported with that almighty wisdom and goodness which fills the universe, and displays itself in all the parts of creation, which establisheth the frame of nature, and turneth the mighty wheels of providence, and keepeth the world from disorder and ruin, than with the faint rays of the same perfections which we meet with in our fellow-creatures? Shall we doat on the scattered pieces of a rude and imperfect picture, and never be affected with the original beauty? This were an unaccountable stupidity and blindness. Whatever we find

lovely in a friend, or in a saint, ought not to engross, but to elevate our affection. We should conclude with ourselves, that if there be so much sweetness in a drop, there must be infinitely more in the fountain; if there be so much splendour in a ray, what must the sun be in its glory?

Nor can we pretend the remoteness of the object, as if God were at too great a distance for our converse or our love: *He is not far from every one of us; for in him we live, and move, and have our being.* We cannot open our eyes, but we must behold some footsteps of his glory; and we cannot turn them toward him, but we shall be sure to find his intent upon us; waiting as it were to catch a look, ready to entertain the most intimate fellowship and communion with us. Let us therefore endeavour to raise our minds to the clearest conceptions of the divine nature. Let us consider all that his works do declare, or his word doth discover of him unto us; and let us especially contemplate that visible representation of him which was made in our own nature by his Son, who was the *brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person;* and who appeared in the world to discover at once what God is, and what we ought to be. Let us represent him unto our minds as we find him described in the gospel; and there we shall behold the perfections of the divine nature, though covered with the veil of human infirmities; and when we have framed unto ourselves the clearest notion that we can of a Being, infinite in power, in wisdom, and goodness; the author and fountain of all perfections, let us fix the eyes of our soul upon it, that our eyes may affect our heart, and while we are musing the fire will burn.

We should meditate on God's goodness and love.

Especially, if hereunto we add the consideration of God's favour and good-will towards us; nothing is more powerful to engage our affection, than to find that we are beloved. Expressions of kindness are always pleasing and acceptable unto us, though the person should be

otherwise mean and contemptible: but to have the love of one who is altogether lovely, to know that the glorious Majesty of heaven hath any regard unto us, how must it astonish and delight us! how must it overcome our spirits, and melt our hearts, and put our whole soul into a flame! Now as the word of God is full of the expressions of his love towards man, so all his works do loudly proclaim it; he gave us our being, and by preserving us in it, doth renew the donation every moment. He hath placed us in a rich and well furnished world, and liberally provided for all our necessities; he raineth down blessings from heaven upon us, and causeth the earth to bring forth our provision; he giveth us our food and raiment, and while we are spending the productions of one year, he is preparing for us against another. He sweeteneth our lives with innumerable comforts, and gratifieth every faculty with suitable objects; the eye of his providence is always upon us, and he watcheth for our safety when we are fast asleep, neither minding him nor ourselves. But lest we should think these testimonies of his kindness less considerable, because they are the easy issues of his omnipotent power, and do not put him to any trouble or pain, he hath taken a more wonderful method to endear himself to us; he hath testified his affection to us, by suffering as well as by doing; and because he could not suffer in his own nature he assumed ours. The eternal Son of God did clothe himself with the infirmities of our flesh, and left the company of those innocent and blessed spirits, who knew well how to love and adore him, that he might dwell among men, and wrestle with the obstinacy of that rebellious race, to reduce them to their allegiance and fidelity, and then to offer himself up as a sacrifice and propitiation for them. I remember one of the poets hath an ingenious fancy to express the passion wherewith he found himself overcome after a long resistance: "That the god of love had shot all his golden arrows at him, but could never pierce his heart, till at length he put himself into the bow, and darted himself straight into his breast." Methinks this doth some way adumbrate God's method

of dealing with men: he had long contended with a stubborn world, and thrown down many a blessing upon them; and when all his other gifts could not prevail, he at last made a gift of himself, to testify his affection and engage theirs. The account which we have of our Saviour's life in the gospel, doth all along present us with the story of his love; all the pains that he took, and the troubles that he endured, were the wonderful effects, and uncontrollable evidences of it. But O that last, that dismal scene! Is it possible to remember it, and question his kindness, or deny him ours? Here, here it is, my dear friend, that we should fix our most serious and solemn thoughts, that Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith: that we being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that we may be filled with all the fulness of God.

We ought also frequently to reflect on those particular tokens of favour and love, which God hath bestowed on ourselves; how long he hath borne with our follies and sins, and waited to be gracious unto us; wrestling, as it were, with the stubbornness of our hearts, and essaying every method to reclaim us. We should keep a register in our minds of all the eminent blessings and deliverances we have met with; some whereof have been so conveyed, that we might clearly perceive they were not the issues of chance, but the gracious effects of the divine favour, and the signal returns of our prayers. Nor ought we to imbitter the thoughts of these things with any harsh or unworthy suspicion, as if they were designed on purpose to enhance our guilt, and heighten our eternal damnation. No, no, my friend, God is love, and he hath no pleasure in the ruin of his creatures; if they abuse his goodness, and turn his grace into wantonness, and thereby plunge themselves into greater depths of guilt and misery, this is the effect of their obstinate wickedness, and not the design of those benefits which he bestows.

If these considerations had once begotten in our hearts

a real love and affection towards Almighty God, that would easily lead us unto the other branches of religion, and therefore I shall need say the less of them.

To beget charity we must remember that all men are nearly related unto God.

We shall find our hearts enlarged in charity towards men, by considering the relation wherein they stand unto God, and the impresses of his image which are stamped upon them. They are not only his creatures, the workmanship of his hands, but such of whom he taketh special care, and for whom he hath a very dear and tender regard; having laid the design of their happiness before the foundations of the world, and being willing to live and converse with them to all the ages of eternity. The meanest and most contemptible person whom we behold, is the offspring of heaven, one of the children of the Most High; and however unworthy he might behave himself of that relation, so long as God hath not abdicated and disowned him by a final sentence, he will have us to acknowledge him as one of his, and as such to embrace him with a sincere and cordial affection. You know what a great concernment we are wont to have for those that do anywise belong to the person whom we love; how gladly we lay hold on every opportunity to gratify the child or servant of a friend; and sure our love towards God would as naturally spring forth in charity towards men, did we mind the interest that he is pleased to take in them, and consider that every soul is dearer unto him than all the material world: and that he did not account the blood of his son too great a price for their redemption.

That they carry God's image upon them.

Again, as all men stand in a near relation to God, so they have still so much of his image stamped upon them, as may oblige and excite us to love them; in some this image is more eminent and conspicuous, and we can discern the lovely traces of wisdom and goodness; and though in others it is miserably sullied and defaced, yet

it is not altogether erased, some lineaments at least do still remain. All men are endued with rational and immortal souls, with understandings and wills capable of the highest and most excellent things; and if they be at present disordered and put out of tune by wickedness and folly, this may indeed move our compassion, but ought not in reason to extinguish our love. When we see a person in a rugged humour, and perverse disposition, full of malice and dissimulation, very foolish and very proud, it is hard to fall in love with an object that presents itself unto us under an idea so little grateful and lovely. But when we shall consider these evil qualities as the diseases and distempers of a soul, which in itself is capable of all that wisdom and goodness wherewith the best of saints have ever been adorned, and which may one day come to be raised unto such heights of perfection as shall render it a fit companion for the holy angels, this will turn our aversion into pity, and make us behold him with such resentments as we should have when we look upon a beautiful body that was mangled with wounds, or disfigured by some loathsome disease; and however we hate the vices, we shall not cease to love the man.

To beget purity, we should consider the dignity of our nature.

In the next place, for purifying our souls, and disentangling our affections from the pleasures and enjoyments of this lower life, let us frequently ponder the excellency and dignity of our nature, and what a shameful and unworthy thing it is for so noble and divine a creature as the soul of man, to be sunk and immersed in brutish and sensual lust, or amused with airy and fantastical delights, and so to lose the relish of solid and spiritual pleasures; that the beast should be fed and pampered, and the man and the christian be starved in us. Did we but mind who we are, and for what we were made, this would teach us in a right sense to reverence and stand in awe of ourselves; it would beget a modesty and shame-facedness, and make us very shy

and reserved in the use of the most innocent and allowable pleasures.

We should meditate often on the joys of heaven.

It will be very effectual to the same purpose, that we frequently raise our minds towards heaven, and represent to our thoughts the joys that are at God's right hand, *those pleasures that endure for evermore; for every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as he is pure.* If our heavenly country be much in our thoughts, it will make us, as strangers and pilgrims, to abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul, and keep ourselves unspotted from this world, that we may be fit for the enjoyments and felicities of the other. But then we must see that our notions of heaven be not gross and carnal, that we dream not of a Mahometan paradise, nor rest on those metaphors and similitudes by which these joys are sometimes represented; for this might, perhaps, have quite a contrary effect; it might entangle us further in carnal affections, and we should be ready to indulge ourselves in a very liberal foretaste of those pleasures, wherein we had placed our everlasting felicity. But when we come once to conceive aright of those pure and spiritual pleasures, when the happiness we propose to ourselves is from the sight, and love, and enjoyment of God, and our minds are filled with the hopes and forethoughts of that blessed estate; O how mean and contemptible will all things here below appear in our eyes! with what disdain shall we reject the gross and muddy pleasures that would deprive us of those celestial enjoyments, or any way unfit and indispose us for them.

Humility arises from the consideration of our failings.

The last branch of religion is humility, and sure we can never want matter of consideration for begetting it: all our wickednesses and imperfections, all our follies and our sins, may help to pull down that fond and overweening conceit which we are apt to entertain of our-

selves. That which makes any body esteem us, is their knowledge or apprehension of some little good, and their ignorance of a great deal of evil that may be in us; were they thoroughly acquainted with us, they would quickly change their opinion. The thoughts that pass in our heart, in the best and most serious day of our life, being exposed unto public view, would render us either hateful or ridiculous: and now, however we conceal our failings from one another, yet sure we are conscious of them ourselves, and some serious reflections upon them would much qualify and allay the vanity of our spirits. Thus holy men have come really to think worse of themselves, than of any other person in the world: not but that they knew that gross and scandalous vices are, in their nature, more heinous than the surprisals of temptations and infirmity; but because they were much more intent on their own miscarriages, than on those of their neighbours, and did consider all the aggravations of the one, and every thing that might be supposed to diminish and alleviate the other.

Thoughts of God give us the lowest thoughts of ourselves.

But it is well observed by a pious writer, that the deepest and most pure humility doth not so much arise from the consideration of our own faults and defects, as from a calm and quiet contemplation of the divine purity and goodness. Our spots never appear so clearly, as when we place them before this infinite light; and we never seem less in our own eyes, than when we look down upon ourselves from on high. O how little, how nothing do all those shadows of perfection then appear, for which we are wont to value ourselves! That humility which cometh from a view of our own sinfulness and misery, is more turbulent and boisterous; but the other layeth us full as low, and wanteth nothing of that anguish and vexation wherewith our souls are apt to boil when they are the nearest objects of our thoughts.

Prayer, another instrument of religion, and the advantages of mental prayer.

There remains yet another means for begetting a holy and religious disposition in the soul; and that is, fervent and hearty prayer. Holiness is the gift of God; indeed the greatest gift he doth bestow, or we are capable to receive; and he hath promised his holy Spirit to those that ask it of him. In prayer we make the nearest approaches to God, and lie open to the influences of heaven: then it is that the sun of righteousness doth visit us with his directest rays, and dissipateth our darkness, and imprinteth his image on our souls. I cannot now insist on the advantages of this exercise, or the dispositions wherewith it ought to be performed, and there is no need I should, there being so many books that treat on this subject; I shall only tell you, that as there is one sort of prayer wherein we make use of the voice, which is necessary in public, and may sometimes have its own advantages in private; and another wherein though we utter no sound, yet we conceive the expressions and form the words, as it were, in our minds: so there is a third and more sublime kind of prayer, wherein the soul takes a higher flight, and having collected all its forces by long and serious meditation, it darteth itself (if I may so speak) towards God in sighs, and groans, and thoughts too big for expression. As when, after a deep contemplation of the divine perfections appearing in all his works of wonder, it addresseth itself unto him in the profoundest adoration of his majesty and glory: or when, after sad reflections on its vileness and miscarriages, it prostrates itself before him with the greatest confusion and sorrow, not daring to lift up its eyes, or utter one word in his presence: or when having well considered the beauty of holiness, and the unspeakable felicity of those that are truly good, it panteth after God, and sendeth up such vigorous and ardent desires as no words can sufficiently express, continuing and repeating each of these acts as long as it finds itself upheld by the force and impulse of the previous meditation.

This mental prayer is of all others the most effectual to purify the soul, and dispose it unto a holy and religious temper, and may be termed the great secret of devotion, and one of the most powerful instruments of the divine life; and it may be the apostle hath a peculiar respect unto it, when he saith, that *the Spirit helpeth our infirmities, making intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered;* or, the original may bear, *that cannot be worded.* Yet I do not so recommend this sort of prayer, as to supersede the use of the other; for we have so many several things to pray for, and every petition of this nature requireth so much time, and so great an intention of spirit, that it were not easy therein to overtake them all; to say nothing that the deep sighs and heavings of the heart which are wont to accompany it, are something oppressive to nature, and make it hard to continue long in them. But certainly a few of these inward aspirations, will do more than a great many fluent and melting expressions.

Religion is to be advanced by the same means by which it is begun; and the use of the holy Sacrament towards it.

Thus, my dear friend, I have briefly proposed the method which I judge proper for moulding the soul into a holy frame; and the same means which serve to beget this divine temper, must still be practised for strengthening and advancing it; and therefore I shall recommend but one more for that purpose, and that is the frequent and conscientious use of that holy Sacrament, which is peculiarly appointed to nourish and increase the spiritual life, when once it is begotten in the soul. All the instruments of religion do meet together in this ordinance; and while we address ourselves unto it, we are put to practise all the rules which were mentioned before. Then it is that we make the severest survey of our actions, and lay the strictest obligations on ourselves; then are our minds raised to the highest contempt of the world, and every grace doth exercise itself with the greatest activity and vigour; all the subjects of contem-

plation do there present themselves unto us with the greatest advantage; and then, if ever, doth the soul make its most powerful sallies towards heaven, and assault it with a holy and acceptable force. And certainly the neglect or careless performance of this duty, is one of the chief causes that bedwarfs our religion, and makes us continue of so low a size.

But it is time I should put a close to this letter, which is grown to a far greater bulk than at first I intended: if these poor papers can do you the smallest service, I shall think myself very happy in this undertaking; at least, I am hopeful you will kindly accept the sincere endeavours of a person who would fain acquit himself of some part of that which he owes you.

A PRAYER.

"And now, O most gracious God, Father and Fountain of mercy and goodness, who hast blessed us with the knowledge of our happiness, and the way that leadeth unto it, excite in our souls such ardent desires after the one, as may put us forth to the diligent prosecution of the other. Let us neither presume on our own strength, nor distrust thy divine assistance; but while we are doing our utmost endeavours, teach us still to depend on thee for success Open our eyes, O God, and teach us out of thy law Bless us with an exact and tender sense of our duty, and a knowledge to discern perverse things. O that our ways were directed to keep thy statutes, then shall we not be ashamed when we have respect unto all thy commandments. Possess our hearts with a generous and holy disdain of all those poor enjoyments which this world holdeth out to allure us, that they may never be able to inveigle our affections, or betray us to any sin: turn away our eyes from beholding vanity, and quicken thou us in thy law. Fill our souls with such a deep sense and full persuasion of those great truths which thou hast revealed in the gospel, as may influence and regulate our whole conversation; and that the life which we henceforth live in the flesh, we may live through faith in the Son of God. O

that the infinite perfections of thy blessed nature, and the astonishing expressions of thy goodness and love, may conquer and overpower our hearts, that they may be constantly rising toward thee in flames of the devoutest affection, and enlarging themselves in sincere and cordial love towards all the world, for thy sake; and that we may cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in thy fear, without which we can never hope to behold and enjoy thee. Finally, O God, grant that the consideration of what thou art, and what we ourselves are, may both humble and lay us low before thee, and also stir up in us the strongest and most ardent aspirations towards thee. We desire to resign and give up ourselves to the conduct of thy holy Spirit; lead us in thy truth, and teach us, for thou art the God of our salvation; guide us with thy counsel, and afterwards receive us unto glory, for the merits and intercession of thy blessed Son our Saviour." *Amen.*

NINE DISCOURSES

ON

IMPORTANT SUBJECTS.

THE SUPERIOR EXCELLENCY OF THE RELIGIOUS.

PROV. XII. 26.

The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour.

He who considereth the excellency and advantage of piety and religion, how conformable it is to the best principle of our nature, and how profitable to our interests, may just wonder and be surprised at the bad entertainment it receives in the world; and easily conclude, that this must needs flow from some gross mistakes about it, and prejudices against it; since it is so natural to us to love that which is good, and delight in that which is amiable, when things are not misrepresented.

Certainly all who are enemies to holiness, have taken up false measures and disadvantageous notions of it. The sensual person hateth it as harsh and unpleasant, doing violence to his carnal appetites; and looks on religion as a contrivance to deprive and rob him of the pleasures of this world, by proposing those of another. The politic wit slights it as foolish and imprudent; and though he acknowledges it a necessary instrument of government, a good device to overawe a multitude, yet he counts a great weakness to be further concerned in it than may be consistent with, and sub-

servient to secular designs. Again, the gallants of our age despise it as a base ignoble temper, unworthy of a high birth and genteel education, incident to meaner souls, proceeding from cowardly and superstitious fear, depressing the mind, and rendering it incapable of high and aspiring thoughts. Hence they make it their business to pour contempt upon piety, and advance the reputation of those vicious courses which themselves have embraced; and because there are yet some left, who, by practising and recommending virtue, do oppose and condemn their lewd practices, they study to avenge themselves on them by the persecution of their tongues, and all the scoffs and reproaches they can invent and utter: which hath proved a mean most unhappily successful to deter many weak minds from goodness, making them choose to be wicked that they may not be laughed at.

It is to discover the grossness of this mistake, and expose the absurdities and unreasonableness of these principles and practices; to vindicate the excellency of piety, and to recommend it to all truly generous souls, that we have made choice of this text, which tells us in short and plain terms, that *the righteous is more excellent than his neighbour.*

None can be so little acquainted with the scripture dialect, as not to know, that though righteousness in its truest acceptation importeth only the observation of those duties we owe our neighbour, yet it is usually taken more largely for piety and virtue in general. And good reason too, since there is no part of our duty but we owe it as a debt unto God; no exercise of religion but it is an act of justice: whence the clear importance of the text is, that whatever excellency other persons may pretend to, the pious and religious men are the truly noble and generous persons in the world; as the Psalmist expresseth it, The saints are excellent ones in the earth.

Now, we shall not trouble you with any further explication of the words, which are so clear, or with any division of a proposition so simple: but shall illustrate

and confirm the assertion, by producing such undoubted evidences of nobleness and excellency, as are proper to godliness, and to those who practise it: where we may have occasion to hint at such characters of a pious man, as, besides the general design, may perhaps serve to put us in mind of some parts of our duty which we are not so careful to observe; and which therefore may be useful even to those who have already embraced the practice of religion.

Being to speak of the nobleness and excellency of religion, it may be expected we should say something of its origin and extract; that being the whole of nobility which some understand, and others pretend to. We might take occasion to discover the folly of glorying in the antiquity of an illustrious house, or the famed virtue of worthy ancestors, who, perhaps, were they alive, would disown their degenerate progeny. But I shall not insist upon this; it is a vanity which hath been chastised sufficiently even by Heathen pens. Nay, we shall so far comply with the common sentiments of the world, as to acknowledge, that high birth and liberal education may contribute much to elevate the minds of men, and accustom them to great thoughts. But sure, whatever advantages any may pretend to by their birth, there are none to be preferred to the children of God, the blood-royal of heaven, the brethren of Christ; of whom we may say, that as he is, so are they, each one resembling the son of a king.

If we trace the lines of earthly extraction, we shall find them all meet in one point; all terminate in dust and earth. But in the heraldry of heaven we shall find a two-fold pedigree. Sin is the offspring of hell, and wicked men are of their father the devil whose work they perform. On the other hand, holiness is the seed of God, and the saints have obtained to be called the sons of the Most High. And think not these are empty titles, and big words, to amuse the world; no, they are equally just and important. Pious men are really partakers of the divine nature, and shall obtain an interest in the inheritance which is entailed on that relation. Never were the

qualities of a parent more really derived unto their children, than the image and similitude of the divine excellencies are stamped upon these heaven-born souls: some beams of that eternal light are darted in upon them, and make them shine with an eminent splendour; and they are always aspiring to a nearer conformity with him, still breathing after a further communication of his Holy Spirit, and daily finding the power thereof correcting the ruder deformities of their natures, and superinducing the beautiful delineations of God's image upon them, that any who observe them may perceive their relation to God, by the excellency of their deportment in the world; as will clearly appear in the sequel of our discourse.

Having spoken of the righteous or godly man's excellency, in regard of his birth and extraction, we proceed to consider his qualities and endowments; and shall begin with those of his understanding, his knowledge and wisdom. The *wise man* tells us, that *a man of understanding is of an excellent spirit.* And sure, if any man in the world is to be accounted of for knowledge, it is the pious man. His knowledge is conversant about the noblest objects; he contemplates that infinite being, whose perfections can never enough be admired, but still afford new matter to astonish and delight him; to ravish his affections, to raise his wonder. He studies the law of God, which maketh him wiser than all his teachers. As the reverend Dr. Tillotson hath it, "It is deservedly accounted an excellent piece of knowledge, to understand the laws of the land, the customs of the country we live in; how much more to know the statutes of heaven, the eternal laws of righteousness, the will of the universal monarch, and the customs of that country where we hope to live for ever." And, if we have a mind to the studies of nature and human science, he is best disposed for it, having his faculties cleared, and his understanding heightened by divine contemplations.

But his knowledge doth not rest in speculations, but directeth his practice, and determineth his choice. And he is the most prudent as well as the most knowing per-

son. He knows how to secure his greatest interest; to provide for the longest life; to prefer solid pleasures to gilded trifles; the soul to the body; eternity to a moment. He knoweth the temper of his own spirit; he can moderate his passions, and overrule his carnal appetites; which certainly is a far more important piece of wisdom, than to understand the intrigues of a state; to fathom the councils of princes; to know the pulse of a people, or balance the interest of kingdoms. Yea, piety doth heighten and advance even moral prudence itself; both obliging and directing a man to order his affairs with discretion: it maketh the simple wise. And what was said by holy David, and twice repeated by his wise son, will hold good in every man's appearance, that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. And thus much of the knowledge and wisdom wherein the righteous man excelleth his neighbour.

We proceed to another of his endowments, the greatness of his mind, and his contempt of the world. We can never take better measures of a man's spirit than from the things he delighteth in, and sets his heart upon: *Qualis amor, talis animus.* To be taken up with trifles, and concerned in little things, is an evidence of a weak and naughty mind. And so are all wicked and irreligious persons: their thoughts are confined to low and mean things; designs of scraping together money, or spending it in luxury; or of satisfying a passion or pleasing a lust; of obtaining the favour of great ones or the applause of the vulgar. The greatest happiness they aim at, is, to be master of the country where they live, to dwell in stately houses, and to be backed with a train of attendants; to lie softly, and fare deliciously, and such like attainments; which a wise man would think himself unhappy if he could not despise.

But the pious person hath his thoughts far above these painted vanities; his felicity is not patched up of so mean shreds; it is simple and comprised in one chief good: his soul advanceth itself by rational passions towards the author of its being, the fountain of goodness and pleasure;

He hath none in heaven but him; and there is none upon earth whom he desires beside him.

The knowledge of nature hath been reputed a good mean to enlarge the soul, and breed in it a contempt of earthly enjoyments. He that hath accustomed himself to consider the vastness of the universe, and the small proportion which the point we live in bears to the rest of the world, may perhaps come to think less of the possessions of some acres, or of that fame which can at most spread itself through a small corner of this earth. Whatever be in this, sure I am that the knowledge of God, and the frequent thoughts of heaven, must needs prove far more effectual to elevate and aggrandize the mind. When once the soul by contemplation is raised to any right apprehension of the divine perfections, and the foretastes of celestial bliss, how will this world, and all that is in it, vanish and disappear before his eyes? with what holy disdain will he look down upon things, which are the highest objects of other men's ambitious desires? All the splendour of courts, all the pageantry of greatness, will no more dazzle his eyes, than the faint lustre of a glow-worm will trouble the eagle, after it hath been beholding the sun. He is little concerned who obtained this dignity, or that fortune; who sits highest at table or goes first out of the door. His thoughts are taken up with greater matters; how he shall please his Maker, and obtain an interest in that land of promise, some of the fruits whereof he hath already tasted. And from thence ariseth that constant and equal frame of spirit, which the pious man's mind maintains in all the changes and vicissitudes of things; while he who hath not his spirit balanced with religious principles, is lift up and cast down like a ship on the sea, with every variation of fortune, and partakes perhaps of all the motions of this inferior world, whereunto his heart and affections are fastened. And certainly he must be far more happy and generous both, who sitteth loose to the world, and can with the greatest calmness and tranquillity possess his own soul, while all things without are

hurry and confusion. Private disasters cannot discompose him, nor public calamities reach him; he looks upon the troubles and combustions of the world, as men do on the ruin and desolation of cities wherein themselves have little interest, with no other concernment than that of pity, to see men trouble themselves and others to so little purpose. *Si fractus illabatur orbis:* If the world should shake and the foundations of the earth be removed; yet would he rest secure in a full acquiescence to the will of God, and confident dependence on his providence: He shall not be afraid of evil tidings: and his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord.

And this, by the affinity, will lead us to another endowment, wherein the excellency of the righteous man doth appear; and that is, that heroic magnanimity and courage wherein he is inspired, and which makes him confidently achieve the most difficult actions, and resolutely undergo the hardest sufferings that he is called to. For this see the epistle to the *Hebrews*, chap. xi. v. 33. Through faith some have subdued kingdoms; this was their active courage; ver. 35. Others again were tortured, &c. this was their passive courage; which in Christians is most eminent and useful. True valour doth more appear by suffering than by doing; and doubtless this is the hardest trial of the two. Were it not for suffering hardships, the greatest coward in the world would be man enough for the highest enterprises. It is not so much the difficulty of great actions, as the danger that attends them, which makes men fear to undertake them: so that to suffer cheerfully must be the greatest proof of courage. And sure, we may appeal to the world to produce such eminent instances of fortitude and resolution, as Christian martyrs have shown under those torments which cannot be mentioned without horror. How often hath their constancy amazed their bloody persecutors and outwearied the cruelties of their tormentors! Nor was this patience perforce: they might have saved themselves that trouble, by throwing a little incense into the fire, or speaking a few blasphemous words; but well had they learned not to fear those who can kill the body,

&c. Nor were they borne out by an obstinate humour, and perverse stoical wilfulness: they were neither stupid and insensible, nor proud and self-conceited: but their sufferings were undertaken with calmness, and sustained with moderation.

Let Heathen Rome boast of a Regulus, a Decius, of some two or three more, stimulated by a desire of glory, and perhaps animated by some secret hopes of future reward, who have devoted their life to the service of their country. But alas! what is this to an infinite number, not only of men but even of women and children, who have died for the profession of their faith; neither seeking or expecting any praise from men? And tell me who among the heathen did willingly endure the loss of reputation? Nay, that was their idol, and they could not part with it. And certainly it is great meanness of spirit, to be overawed with fear of disgrace, and depend upon the thoughts of the people. True courage doth equally fortify the mind against all those evils, and will make a man hazard his honour, as well as other things, when occasion calls for it.

Now, if the celebrated actions of the Heathens come short of true courage, what shall we say of the furious boldness of the Hectors of our age, who pretend to prowess and gallantry by far less reasonable methods? when, blinded with passion, and animated with wine, they are ready enough, on half a quarrel, to hazard their own and their neighbour's life, and soul too, in a duel? yea, they will not stand to brave heaven itself, and provoke the Almighty by their horrid oaths and blasphemies. And one should think, that these must needs be the hardiest and most valiant people in the world; if they are not afraid of the Almighty, sure nothing else should fright them. And yet you shall find these very persons, when cast on a bed by sickness, or brought to the scaffold by justice, to betray a miserable faintness and pusillanimity: they are forced now to think on the terrors of death, and the more terrible consequences of it; and their counterfeit courage, being destitute of those props which formerly sustained it, doth now discover its weakness.

Nor is it any wonder: for what should make a man willingly leave this world, unless he expected a more happy condition in another? Certainly there is nothing can fortify the soul with a true and manly courage, but a confidence in God and hopes of future blessedness. The wicked flee when no man pursueth; but the righteous is bold as a lion; and from that accounted more excellent than his neighbour.

From courage and magnanimity we pass to that which is the genuine issue and ordinary consequence of it, the liberty and freedom of the righteous person. Liberty is a privilege so highly rated by all men, that many run the greatest hazards for the very name of it: but there are few that enjoy it. I shall not speak of those fetters of ceremony, and chains of state, wherewith great men are tied; which makes their actions constrained, and their converse uneasy: this is more to be pitied than blamed. But wicked and irreligious persons are under a far more shameful bondage: they are slaves to their own lusts, and suffer the violence and tyranny of their irregular appetites. This is frequently talked of, but seldom considered or believed; and therefore it will not be amiss to bring an instance or two for the illustration of it. Observe a passionate man, and you shall find him frequently transported and overpowered by his anger, and carried to those extremities, of which a little time makes him ashamed; and he becomes as much displeased with himself, as formerly he was with his adversary: and yet on the next occasion, he will obey that same passion which he hath condemned. What a drudge is a covetous man to his riches, which takes up his thoughts all the day long, and break his sleep in the night? How must the ambitious man fawn and flatter, and cross his humour with hopes to satisfy it; stoop to the ground that he may aspire, courting and caressing those whom he hates; which, doubtless, is done with a great violence and constraint. The drunkard, when he awakes and hath slept out his cups and his frolic humour, and finds his head aching,

his stomach qualmish, and perhaps his purse empty, and reflects on the folly and unhandsome expressions or actions he may have fallen into in his drink, how will he condemn himself for that excess? what harangues shall we have from him in the praise of temperance! what promises and resolutions of future sobriety! and yet, on the next occasion, the poor slave shall be dragged away to the tavern by those whom he must call his friends; and thank them who put that abuse upon him, which a wise and sober person will rather die than suffer. Further, the luxurious would fain preserve or recover his health; and to this end finds it requisite to keep a temperate and sober diet. No; but he must not. He is present at a feast, and his superior appetite calls for a large measure of delicious fare; and his palate must be pleased, though the whole body should suffer for it: or he hath met with a lewd woman; and though his whole bones should rot, and a dart strike through his liver, yet must he obey the command of his lusts: He goeth after her straightway, as the ox goeth to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks. Now, there can be no greater evidence of slavery and bondage, than thus to do what themselves know to be prejudicial. It were easy to illustrate this bondage and thraldom of the soul, in all the other instances of vice and impiety: And certainly what St. Peter saith of some false teachers, may be well applied to all wicked persons: while they promised freedom, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage.

But the holy and religious person hath broken these fetters; cast off the yoke of sin, and become the freeman of the Lord. It is religion that restores freedom to the soul which philosophy did pretend to: it is that which doth sway and moderate all those blind passions and impetuous affections, which else would hinder a man from the possession and enjoyment of himself; and makes him master of his own thoughts, motions, and desires, that he may do with freedom what he judgeth

most honest and convenient. And thus the righteous man excelleth his neighbour, as much as a freeman doth the basest slave.

Another particular, wherein the nobleness and excellency of religion doth appear, is in a charitable and benign temper. There is no greater evidence of a base and narrow soul, than for a man to have all his thoughts taken up with private and selfish interest; and so, if they be well, not to care what becometh of the rest of the world. On the other hand, an extensive charity and kindness, as it is the one half of our religion, so it is an eminent point of generosity. The righteous is gracious, and full of compassion; he showeth favour and lendeth; and makes it his work to serve mankind as much as he is able. His bounty is not confined to his kindred and relations, to those of his own party and mode of religion: this were but a disguised kind of self-love. It is enough to him that they are christians; or, if they were not, yet are they men; and therefore deserve our pity, but not our hatred or neglect, because of their errors. It is true, he carries a special kindness for those in whom he discovers a principle of goodness and virtue; in those excellent ones is all his delight. But then he doth not take his measure so much from their judgment and opinions, as from the integrity of their life, and exactness of their practices.

His charity doth not express itself in one particular tnstance, as that of giving alms; but is vented as many ways as the variety of occasions do call for, and his power can reach to. He assisteth the poor with his money; the ignorant with his counsel; the afflicted with his comfort; the sick with the best of his skill: all with his blessings and prayers. If he cannot build hospitals, yet he will study to persuade those who can: if he hath no money to redeem captives, yet will he employ his interest in the court of heaven for their deliverance: though he cannot recover a dying child to the afflicted parents, yet will he endeavour to persuade them to submission and resignation, which will render them more happy; and will go hard, but he will find some way, either

to benefit or oblige every man with whom he converseth. Let no man upbraid us with the contrary practices of many high pretenders to religion, who are notedly selfish and churlish persons. We are not to defend the actions of all who would be thought godly; nor must you take your measures of piety from what you observe in them. But look through the gospel, and you shall find charity and bounty so passionately recommended, so frequently inculcated, and so indispensably required, that you may easily conclude there are no christians in earnest, but those who practise it. Yea, so peculiar is this liberal and benign temper to holy and religious persons, that nothing but a faint resemblance and false imitation is to be found elsewhere in the world. Other men's seeming bounty is always marred by the base principle it proceeds from, and selfish end it tends to. The Apostle hath told us, that a man may give all his goods to feed the poor, and yet want charity; and all these expenses shall profit him nothing. Importunity may perhaps wring something out of his pocket, or a willingness to be delivered from the trouble of a miserable spectacle, but vanity and a desire of applause, have usually the greatest interest in his distributions. This made the hypocrites of old proclaim their alms with trumpets; and this makes their successors in our times delight to have their good works of this kind recorded to the greatest advantage, that posterity may read them on walls and public registers.

To the same principle must we refer what in the world passeth for a very considerable instance of generosity, the keeping of a great house and well furnished table: which nevertheless is more ordinarily the effect of pride and vain glory, than of humility or hospitality. It is a part of their splendour and state; and they deck their tables for the same end that they put on fine clothes, to be talked of and admired in the world. You may guess it by the persons whom they entertain; who are usually such as need least of their charity, and for whom they have many times as little kindness or concernment, as an innkeeper for his

guests; nor are they less mercenary than he; the one sells his meat for money, the other for praise. Far more generous is the practice of the pious man; who, as he chooseth most to benefit those who can make him no recompense, so he doth not trouble the world with the noise of his charity; yea, his left hand knoweth not what his right hand bestoweth: and that which doth most endear his bounty, is the love and affection whence it proceeds.

We shall name but one instance more wherein the righteous man excelleth his neighbour; and that is, his venerable temperance and purity. He hath risen above the vaporous sphere of sensual pleasure, which darkeneth and debaseth the mind, which sullies its lustre, and abates its native vigour; while profane persons, wallowing in impure lusts, do sink themselves below the condition of men. Can there be any spark of generosity, any degree of excellency in him who makes his belly his god, or places his felicity in the embraces of a strumpet? We spoke before of the slavery, we speak now of the deformity of these sins: and shall add, that one of the most shameful and miserable spectacles in the world, is, to see a man born to the use of reason, and perhaps to an eminent fortune, drink away his religion, his reason, his sense; and so expose himself to the pity of wise men, the contempt of his own servants, the derision of his children,—and fools to every danger, and to every snare; and that this must pass in the eyes of many for a piece of gallantry, and necessary accomplishment of a gentleman. Good God! how are the minds of men poisoned with perverse notions? what unreasonable measures do they take of things? We may expect next they shall commend theft, and make harangues to the praise of parricide; for they are daily advancing the boldness of their impieties, and with confidence avowing them. Other ages have practised wickedness; but to ours is reserved the impudence to glory in them. But would men but open their own eyes, and give way to the sentiments of there own minds, they would soon alter

their maxims, and discover the miserable deformity of vice, and the amiable beauty and majesty of religion; that it doth at once adorn and advance the human nature, and hath in it every thing generous and noble, cheerful and spiritual, free and ingenuous; in a word, that the righteous is more excellent than his neighbour.

Before we proceed further, it will be necessary to take off some prejudices and objections that arise against the nobleness and excellency of religion. And the first is, That it enjoineth lowliness and humility; which men ordinarily look upon as an abject and base disposition. What, will they say, can ever that man aspire to any thing that is excellent, whose principles oblige him to lie low and grovel on the ground; who thinks nothing of himself, and is content that all the world think nothing of him? Is this a disposition fit for any but those whose cross fortune obliged them to suffer miseries and affronts? Such are men's thoughts of humility, which God loves so much, that we may say he sent his own Son from heaven to teach and recommend it. But if we ponder the matter, we shall find, that arrogance and pride are the issues of base and silly minds, a giddiness incident to those who are raised suddenly to unaccustomed height; nor is there any vice doth more palpably defeat its own design, depriving a man of that honour and reputation which it makes him aim at.

On the other hand, we shall find humility no silly and sneaking quality; but the greatest height and sublimity of the mind, and the only way to true honour: Before destruction the heart of man is haughty, and before honour is humility. Lowliness is the endowment of high-born and well-educated souls, who are acquainted with the knowledge of excellent things; and therefore do not doat upon trifles, or admire little things merely because they are their own. They have no such high opinion of riches, beauty, strength, or other the like advantages, as to value themselves for them, or to despise those who want them: but they study to surmount themselves, and all the little attainments they have hitherto reached, and are still aspiring to higher and more noble things. And

it is worth our notice, " that the most deep and pure humility doth not so much arise from the consideration of our faults and defects, (though that also may have its own place,) as from a calm contemplation of the divine perfections. By reflecting on ourselves, we may discover something of our own sinfulness and misery; and thereby be filled with a kind of boisterous and turbulent grief and indignation: but, by fixing our eyes on the infinite greatness and holiness of God, we are most fully convinced of our own meanness. This will sink us to the very bottom of our beings, and make us appear as nothing in our own sight, when beheld from so great a height." And this is really the greatest elevation of the soul; and there is nothing in the world so noble and excellent as the sublimity of humble minds.

Another objection against the excellency of a religious temper, is, That the love of enemies, and pardon of injuries, which it includeth, is utterly inconsistent with the principles of honour. Now, though it be highly unreasonable to examine the laws of our Saviour by such rules as this, yet we shall consider the matter a little. Nor shall we seek to elude or qualify this precept, as some do, by such glosses and evasions as may suit with their own practices: nay, we shall freely profess, that there is no salvation without the observation of it. A man had even as well abandon Christianity, and renounce his baptism, as obstinately refuse to obey it. But if we have any value for the judgment of the wisest man and a great king, he will tell us, that it is the honour of man to cease from strife; and he that is slow to wrath, is of great understanding. The meek and lowly person liveth above the reach of petty injuries; and blunts the edge of the greatest by his patience and constancy; and hath compassion towards those who offend him: being more sorry for the prejudice they do themselves, than for that which they intended him. And let all the world judge whether it be more generous to pity and love even those who hate us, and to pardon the greatest offences, than peevishly to quarrel on every petty occasion, and make men fear our passion, hate our humour, and aban-

don our society? So that what is here brought as an objection against religion, might with reason enough have been brought as an instance of its nobleness.

Having thus illustrated and confirmed what is asserted in the text, that the righteous is more excellent than his neighbour; let us improve it as a check to that profane and atheistical spirit of drollery and scoffing at religion, which hath got abroad in the world. Alas! do men consider what it is which they make the butt of their scoffs and reproaches? Have they nothing else to exercise their wit and vent their jests upon, but that which is the most noble and excellent thing in the world? What design can they propose unto themselves by this kind of impiety? Would they have religion banished from the face of the earth, and forced to retire for shame? What a goodly world should we then have of it! what a fine harmony and order of things! Certainly the earth would then become a kind of hell, with tumults and seditions, rapines and murders, secret malice, and open frauds, by every vice and every calamity. 'Tis only some little remainders of piety and virtue in the world that keep it in any tolerable condition, or make it possible to be inhabited. And must not those be wretched persons, and woful enemies to mankind, who do what they can to reduce the world to such a miserable condition? But let them do what they will; they but kick against the pricks. Religion hath so much native lustre and beauty, that, notwithstanding all the dirt they study to cast upon it; all the melancholy and deformed shapes they dress it in, it will attract the eyes and admiration of all sober and ingenuous persons: and while these men study to make it ridiculous, they shall but make themselves so. And O! that they would consider how dear they are to pay for those dull and insipid jests wherewith they persecute religion, and those who practise it or recommend it! what thoughts they are like to have of them when sickness shall arrest, and death threaten them, when the physicians shall have forsaken them, and the poor despised minister is called in, and they expecting comfort from him they were wont to mock, and per-

haps it is little he can afford them. O that they were wise, and understood this, that they would consider their latter end!

There are others who have not yet arrived to this height of profaneness, to laugh at all religion; but do vent their malice at those who are more conscientious and severe than themselves, under presumption that they are hypocrites and dissemblers. But besides that in this they may be guilty of a great deal of uncharitableness, it is to be suspected that they bear some secret dislike to piety itself, and hate hypocrisy more for its resemblance of that, than for its own viciousness; otherwise whence comes it that they do not express the same animosity against other vices?

Hitherto also may we refer those expressions which sometimes drop from persons not so utterly debauched, but which yet are blasphemous and profane; that this man is too holy, and that man too religious, as if it were possible to exceed in these things. What! can a man approach too near to God? Can he be too like his maker? Is it possible to be over-perfect or over-happy? I confess a man may overact some parts of religion, and be too much in some particular exercises of it, neglecting other as necessary duties. But this is not an excess of piety, but a defect of discretion. And reason would teach us rather to pardon men's infirmities for their pious inclinations, than to blame piety for their infirmities.

Let me therefore entreat you all, especially those whose birth and fortunes render them more conspicuous in the world, to countenance holiness, which you see is so excellent; and beware that you do not contribute to that deluge of wickedness that overfloweth the earth, by scoffing at the most serious things in the world. And, if I obtain this, I shall make bold to beg one thing more, but it is in your own favours; that you would also abandon every kind of impiety in your own practice, since in it every vile ruffian may vie and contend with you. In other cases you forsake modes and customs when they become common. Wickedness is now the

most vulgar and ordinary thing in the world. Shift, I beseech you, the fashion, and embrace piety and virtue; wherein none but excellent persons shall rival you. Learn to adore your nature: and think it not below you to stand in awe of him who can rend the heavens, and make the foundations of the earth shake; who needs but to withdraw his mercies to make you miserable, or his assistance to reduce you to nothing. Study to ennoble your souls with solid knowledge and true wisdom; with an eminent greatness of mind, and contempt of the world; a great liberty and freedom of spirit; an undaunted magnanimity and courage; and extensive charity and goodness; a venerable temper and purity; an amiable meekness and humility; so shall you render yourselves honourable, and more excellent than your neighbours in this world; and be partakers of immortal honour and glory in the world to come. *Amen.*

THE INDISPENSABLE DUTY OF LOVING OUR ENEMIES.

LUKE VI. 27.

But I say unto you which hear, love your enemies.

WHILE we travel through the wilderness of this world, much of the comfort of our pilgrimage depends on the good correspondence, and mutual services and endearments of our fellow-travellers. Therefore, our blessed Saviour, whose precepts are all intended for our perfection and felicity, fitted to procure to us both the good things of this world, and that which is to come, has taken especial care to join and unite the minds of men in the strictest bonds of friendship and love. He hath been at great pains by his precepts and by his example, by earnest persuasions and powerful motives, to smooth our rugged humours, and calm our passions,

and take off the roughness and asperity from our natures, which hinders us from joining and cementing together. Now, were we to converse with none but such as are Christians in earnest, we should find it no hard matter to live in concord and love; we should meet with no occasion of quarrel and contention; and should only be obliged to love our friends, because all men would be such. But well did our Saviour know, that his part was to be small in the world; that many would oppose the profession, and many more would neglect the practice of that religion which he taught; and that his followers, besides common injuries incident to others, were to meet with much enmity and hatred for their Master's sake; and therefore, that, amidst all these storms, they might maintain that constant serene tranquillity, that amiable sweetness and benignity of spirit, without which they could neither be like him, nor happy in themselves, he was pleased to enjoin such an ardent affection and charity towards all men, as no neglect can cool, no injury can extinguish. To love those who have obliged us, is that which nature might teach, and wicked men practice; to favour those who have never wronged us, is but a piece of common humanity: but our religion requires us to extend our kindness even to those who have injured and abused us, and who continue to do and wish us mischief; and that we never design any other revenge against our most bitter and inveterate enemies, than to wish them well, and do them all the good we can, whether they will or not: for unto those that hear him our Saviour saith, love your enemies.

But, alas! how little is this minded by the greater part of those who call themselves Christians. Other precepts are broken and slighted, but this is industriously baffled and discredited by us. In other cases we acknowledge our fault, but study to qualify and excuse it by the frailty of our nature, or violence of a temptation: (we are all sinners; it is a fault indeed, but who can help it?) Now, though these excuses, God knows, are very frivolous, and will be of no force in the great day

of our accounts; yet they imply something of modesty and ingenuous acknowledgement, and men may repent and forsake what they already condemn. But in the instance of loving enemies, and pardoning offences, many are so bold and impudent, that, instead of obeying, they quarrel with the law as impossible and unjust; passing sentence upon that by which themselves must be judged. How unreasonable is it (say they) that we should love those that hate us? What congruity between that act and those objects! Can cold snow produce heat, or enmity beget affection? Must we be insensible of the injuries we meet with, or reward him that offers them? Must we dissolve the principles of our nature, and cease to be men, that we may become Christians? These, and such like, are either the expressions or thoughts of too many among us! and either Christ must come down in his offers, and remit somewhat of the rigour of his laws, or else all the promises of the gospel, all the pleasures of the other world, shall not engage them to his obedience. They will rather choose to burn in eternal flames of fury and discord, than live at peace with those that have wronged them.

It can therefore never be unseasonable to press a duty so very necessary, yet so much neglected. The text I have chosen for this purpose is very plain and clear:—Love your enemies. But, because many do strain the precept to some such sense as may suit with their own practice, we shall first search into the importance of it, and then persuade you to perform it. The full meaning and importance of the precept will appear, if we consider, first, Who they are whom we are commanded to love; and secondly, Wherein the love we owe them does consist.

The persons whom we are commanded to love, are called our enemies. And lest we should mistake them, they are clearly described in the following words:—The fountain of their enmity is within. They are those who hate us; who envy our happiness, who wish our misery, and abhor our persons and society. But, were this fire kept within their breast, it might well scorch themselves,

it could not prejudice us: but out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh; their malice does sharpen their tongues. They are farther described as those that curse us; they vent their wrath in oaths and imprecations, secret calumnies, and open reproaches. Nor are their hands always bound up; they use us despitefully, and procure us mischief. Now, if our love must be extended to all these, we shall hardly find any whom we dare safely exclude. Of our private enemies there can be no question. But what shall be said of the enemies of our country, I see no warrant to exclude them from our charity. We may indeed lawfully oppose their violent invasion, and defend our rights with the sword, under the banner of the public magistrate, to whom such authority is committed: but all this may be done with as little malice and hatred as a judge may punish a malefactor; the general may be as void of passion as the lord chief justice; and the soldier, as the executioner. But charity will oblige a prince never to have recourse to the sword, till all other remedies fail; to blunt the edge of war, by sparing as much as may be the shedding of innocent blood, with all other barbarities that use to accompany it; and to accept of any reasonable capitulation.

We come next to the enemies of our religion: and indeed there are many who are so far from thinking them to be among the number of those whom they are obliged to love, that they look upon it as a part of their duty to hate and malign them. Their zeal is continually venting itself in fierce invectives against Antichrist, and every thing they are pleased to call antichristian; and they are ready to apply all the prophecies and imprecations of the Old Testament, in their very prayers, against those that differ from them. And ordinarily the animosities are greatest where the differences are least; and one party of a reformed church shall be more incensed against another, than either against the superstition and tyranny of Rome, or the carnality of the Mahometan faith. Yea, perhaps you may find some who agree in opinion, and only differ in several ways of expressing

the same thing, and yet can scarce look on one another without displeasure and aversion. But, alas! how much do these men disparage that religion for which they appear so zealous, how much do they mistake the spirit of christianity! Are the persons whom they hate, greater enemies to religion, than those who persecuted the apostles and martyrs for professing it? And yet these were the persons whom our Saviour commanded his disciples to love: and himself did pray for those that crucified him; and severely checked the disciples, when, by a precedent brought from the Old Testament, they would have called for fire from heaven on those who would not receive them; telling them, They knew not what spirit they were of: i. e. They did not consider by what spirit they were prompted to such cruel inclinations; or, as others explain it, they did not yet sufficiently understand the temper and genius of christianity; which is pure and peaceable, gentle and meek: full of sweetness, and full of love. If men would impartially examine their hatred and animosity against the enemies of their religion, I fear they would find them proceed from a principle which themselves would not willingly own. Pride and self-conceit will make a man disdain those of a different persuasion; and think it a disparagement to his judgment, that any should differ from it. Mere nature and self-love will make a man hate those who oppose the interest and advancement of that party which himself has espoused. Hence men are many times more displeased at some small mistakes in judgment, than the greatest immoralities in practice! yea, perhaps, they will find a secret pleasure, and wicked satisfaction, in hearing or reporting the faults or scandal of their adversaries. Certainly the power of religion rightly prevailing in the soul, would mould us into another temper: it would teach us to love and pity, and pray for the person, as well as hate and condemn the errors they are supposed to espouse: it would make us wish their conversion rather than their confusion; and be more desirous that God would fit them for another world, than that he would take them out of this. We may in-

deed wish the disappointment of their wicked purposes; for this is charity to them, to keep them from being the unhappy instruments of mischief in the world: but he that can wish plagues and ruin to their persons, and delights in their sins, or in their misery, hath more of the devil than the christian.

Thus you have seen who those enemies are to whom our charity must be extended. It follows to be considered, what is the nature of the love we owe them. I shall not now spend your time in any nice or curious speculations about the nature of this master-passion. It is the prime affection of the soul, which gives measures, and sets bounds to all the rest; every man's hatred, grief, and joy, depending upon, and flowing from his love. I shall now only observe to you, that there is a sensible kind of love, a certain tenderness and melting affection implanted in us by nature towards our nearest relations, on purpose to engage us to those peculiar services we owe them; and there is an intimacy and delightful union between friends, arising from some especial sympathy of humours, and referring to the maintenance of such correspondences. These are not always at our command; nor are we obliged to love either strangers or enemies at this rate. It is not to be expected, that at first sight of a person, who hath nothing singularly taking, we should find such a special kindness and tenderness arising for him in our hearts; much less can fondness and passionate affection proceed from the sense of any harm received from him. The command in the text does not amount to this, (though there be a great advantage in a tender and affectionate disposition, both to secure and facilitate our duty;) but we are certainly obliged to such a sincere and cordial good-will to all men, as will incline us to perform all the good offices we can, even to those who have offended us. But the nature and measures of this love will more fully appear, if we consider what it does exclude, and what it does imply.

First, then, it excludes all harsh thoughts and groundless suspicions. The Apostle telleth us, that charity thinketh no evil; that it hopeth all things, believeth all

things. To entertain, with pleasure, every bad report of those who have offended us, and to put the worst construction on their doubtful actions, is both a clear evidence of our hatred, and an unhappy method to continue it. Were once the love we recommend seated in the soul, it would soon cast out those restless jealousies, sour suspicions, harsh surmises, and imbittered thoughts; and display itself in a more candid and gentle disposition; in fair glosses, and friendly censures; in a favourable extenuation of greater faults, and covering of lesser. It would make a man interpret all things in the best meaning they are capable of; and choose rather to be mistaken to his own prejudice, by a too favourable opinion, than to his neighbour's, by a groundless jealousy. And even in this sense it may be, that charity covereth a multitude of sins.

Again, the love which we owe to enemies, excludes all causeless and immoderate anger: It suffereth long, and is not easily provoked; endureth all things. Our Saviour tells us, that whoso is angry with his brother without a cause, shall be in danger of the judgment; and if his anger exceed the cause he is equally guilty. All anger is not vicious; we may be angry, and not sin. This passion, as all others implanted in us by God, is innocent when kept within its due bounds: it has its proper office in the mind, as the spleen in the body; but its excess and distemper swells into a disease. To make it allowable, it must not exceed the value of the cause, nor the proportion of the circumstances. It must be governed by discretion, and kept within the bounds of reason, that it break not forth into indecent expressions, or violent and blamable actions. And further, it must not be too permanent and lasting; we must not let the sun set upon our anger. Plutarch tells us, that the Pythagoreans were careful to observe the very letter of this precept: for if anger had boiled up to the height of an injury or reproach, before sunset they would salute each other, and renew their friendship; they were ashamed that the same anger which had disturbed the counsels of the day, should also trouble the

quiet and repose of the night, lest, mingling with their rest and dreams, it should become prevalent and habitual in them. And sure, we owe an infinitely greater deference to the precepts of our blessed Saviour, and his holy apostles, than they did to their master's reasoning and advices. And though we should not take this precept in its strictest and literal signification, yet this we must know, that the same passion and resentment which was innocent and rational in its first rise, may become vicious and criminal by its continuance. Anger may kindle in the breast of a wise man, but rests only in the bosom of a fool. And this will lead us to a third thing which the precept in our text does condemn.

The love of enemies here commanded, does exclude all rooted malice and rancour, proceeding from the memory and resentment of injuries, after the prejudice and harm sustained by them is over. Certainly there is nothing more contrary to charity than a peevish ruminating and poring on the offences we have met with; and their memories are very ill employed, who seldom remember a courtesy, or forget a wrong. It is ordinary for some who dare not profess intentions of revenge, to express their resentment in some such threatening as this: That they will forgive the injury, but never forget it. I hope they do not mean, they will pass it at this time, and revenge it afterward. This would but make the sin the greater, by being more deliberate. Is it then that they intend them no harm, but will cease to do them good? This is a lame and imperfect charity; expressly contradictory to the precept in the text, enjoining us to bless them that curse us, to do good to them that hate us, and to pray for them that despitefully use us. Nor must we expect the blessing of God, if this be all we allow to others; for with what measure we mete, it shall be measured to us again. There is but one way we may lawfully remember an injury; and that is so as to be more cautious in trusting one who hath deceived us, or exposing ourselves to the power of him who hath wronged us. In this case religion does allow and direct us to join the serpent's wisdom with the dove's innocency.

But then, I am sure, it is neither necessary nor fit to threaten those who have wronged us, with our resolutions to remember the injury. We may be as cautious as we please without it; and those threats do nothing but rankle and displease our adversary, which ought to be no part of a Christian's design. A meek and charitable person will be loth to have his memory infested, and his thoughts soured with resentment of wrongs; and if they occur to his mind, he will make no other use of them than to put himself on his guard; unless from thence he take occasion to benefit and oblige the person who has offended him, and, as our text expressly directs, to do him good, to bless and pray for him.

Again, this precept does exclude and prohibit the taking or procuring any revenge. By revenge, we mean such a simple evil done to our adversary, as does bring no real benefit or reputation to ourselves. For certainly it is not unlawful to seek the reparation of our own right by an authorised judge, nor yet to provide for the public security by the punishment of offenders, unless some special circumstance makes it so. This may many times be done without prejudice or hatred, yea, with great kindness and compassion towards the person of the offender. But, if we have any charity or love to our adversaries, we shall be really afflicted with the evils that befalls them; and therefore will never willingly procure ourselves that trouble by inflicting it on them. It is evidence of a wicked and malicious humour, to please ourselves in the misery of another, or delight in an evil that brings us no good. Whatever latitude the Jews either had or pretended to, it is not lawful for us to desire eye for eye, or tooth for tooth, unless we could say, that his eye would serve our head, or his hand fit our arm, or his pain allay our torment, which he had procured to us.

From hence we may judge what is to be thought of those who are ready to revenge the smallest injury, even an uncivil expression, with the death of the offender; never being satisfied till they have ventured two lives, and as many souls, in the combat; a thing which should

not be named among Christians, but with the same detestation we have against the vilest actions; for whatever colours of bravery or gallantry it may be painted with, it is really nothing else than a more specious and formal kind of murder. Nor does it differ from the basest assassination, save only in this, with the wickedness of attempting another's life it joins the rashness and folly of exposing our own.

Lastly, the love which we owe our enemies, does exclude all supercilious and scornful contempt and neglect of them. Which I mark the rather, because some think they have sufficiently obeyed the precept, if they overlook an injury, as thinking the person below their revenge. Meanwhile, their corrupt nature relishes as much pleasure in the scorn and disdain of their enemies, as it could in the revenge of the injury: their wicked humours are not starved, but only change their diet. Of this nature was the answer of the philosopher, to some who incited and provoked him to revenge, 'If an ass kick me, shall I kick him again?' This is but a lame and misshapen charity; it hath more of pride than goodness. We should learn of the holy Jesus, who was not only meek, but lowly. We should contemn the injury, and pity the weakness, but should not disdain or despise the persons of our enemies. Charity vaunteth not herself, is not puffed up, doth not behave herself unseemly.

Having thus discovered those things which are inconsistent with charity, and excluded by the love of enemies, it remains that we show what it does import and require.

First, then, it imports an inward kindness and affection; which, if it does not amount to that passionate tenderness which we have for our near relations and intimate friends, yet it implies a good will towards them, and friendly concernment in their interest. If we love an enemy, we shall wish his welfare, and rejoice in it, and be unfeignedly sorry for any disaster that befalls him; so far shall we be from rejoicing in his misfortunes. And certainly had we a right sense of things, we should be more troubled for the harm which our enemy does to

his own soul by wronging us, than for the prejudice we sustain by him: our compassion towards him would diminish, if not altogether swallow up the resentment of what we suffer from him.

But our kindness and good will towards our enemies must not rest in empty wishes, but express itself in kind words and friendly actions. When we speak to our enemy, it must be in such smooth, discreet, and obliging terms, as are most like to mollify and gain him, that by soft answers we may turn away his wrath, and shun all grievous words, which stir up anger. When we speak of him, it should be as advantageously as we can with truth, concealing or qualifying his faults, and praising whatever is good in him. And sure he must be singularly bad in whom we can find nothing to commend.

Again, we must perform for them all those good offices which their necessities call for, and our power can reach. Do good to them that hate you. If our enemy hunger, we must feed him; if he thirst, we must give him drink; so shall we heap coals of fire upon his head, to mollify his obdurate temper, and overcome his evil by our good; but not to aggravate his guilt and punishment, as some mistake the words: for though that be many times the issue, yet ought it not to be any part of our design.

Lastly, because all that we can do for the good of enemies, signifies little, we must employ our interest in the court of heaven in their behalf, begging of God that he would turn their hearts to himself and to us, and bless them with the pardon of all their sins, particularly the wrongs they have done to ourselves, and with all things necessary for their present welfare, or future happiness. Pray for them that despitefully use you. And this is the surest evidence of our charity to them. Mild words may be designed as a snare to entrap them, and courtesy may be done them to serve our vanity, or a generous kind of pride; which may make us delight to have our enemy indebted to us, as knowing that it is more glorious in the eyes of the world to raise a fallen adversary than to trample on him. But it must be only obedience

to God's commands, and sincere love to our enemy, which can make us take him into our closet, and into our heart; to share our prayers with him, and make him partake of the fruits of our devotion; and to have that same concernment for his interests as for our own, at once recommending them both to our heavenly Father.

By this time I hope you understand the importance of this precept of our Saviour, Love your enemies: it remains, that we exhort you to the performance. And I shall begin with an argument, which may be of force to give the first assault to our rebellious inclinations, and make way for further and more mild persuasions, and it shall be the indispensable necessity of the duty. We must not look upon this as a matter which we may do or omit at pleasure; nor yet as a counsel of perfection, highly commendable, but not absolutely necessary to salvation. It is as indispensably required as any other duty of our religion; and he who resolves not to obey in this instance, may renounce his baptism, and abandon christianity. None can escape the obligation of the precept, unless he be so rarely happy as to have no enemies; nor must any think to redeem themselves from this by some other performance. Let our opinions be never so orthodox, and our zeal in maintaining them never so fervent; let our prayers be never so frequent, and all our discourses ravishing; let our other attainments be never so great, and our confidence of our salvation never so strong; yet, if we refuse to obey this precept, we are none of Christ's disciples; or, in the words of the Apostle, we may say, Though I speak with the tongues of men and angels; though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor; yea, although I give my body to be burned, and have not this charity and love, even to mine enemies, it profiteth me nothing. And our Saviour himself tells us in express terms, that unless we forgive others their trespasses, neither will God forgive us ours. Yea, he hath taught us to pray for pardon, in such terms as imports a dreadful curse upon ourselves, if we are malicious and revengeful, while we

beg God would pardon us in the same manner that we pardon those who sin against us; subscribing, as it were, with our own hands, and confirming out of our own mouths, that sentence which shall be pronounced against us; for even so will God forgive us, i. e. he will take vengeance on us, if we have dealt so with others. And as those who do not love their enemies, do beg their own condemnation in prayer; so also they eat and drink it in the holy sacrament. And men are commonly so far convinced of this, that many choose to keep back from the table of the Lord, that they may more freely entertain their animosities. But, alas! what a folly and madness this is! Think they to excuse a sin by the neglect of a duty? Or can they put off death, as they do the participation of the sacrament? Or can they hope to be admitted into the eternal enjoyment of God, if they should die in that malice, which renders them unfit to approach unto him in that holy ordinance? Do not deceive yourselves: never shall any enter into those blessed mansions, those regions of peace and love, whose heart is not first inspired with charity, and softened into a compliance with this very precept. And it were as absurd, to think that a man may be malicious and revengeful all his days, and yet go to heaven, there to learn meekness and charity, as to think that a man may be luxurious and dishonest in this world, and become temperate, and honest, and happy in the other. In a word, whatever shifts we may make to deceive ourselves, the command is clear and express, the sanction severe and peremptory; we have but our choice of these two, love of enemies, or damnation.

Nor can this seem unreasonable to any who considers, that God is the author of our natures, the creator of all our faculties may justly rule our inclinations, and dispose of our love and affection: and yet he is content (if I may so speak) to bargain with us, and to buy off our natural, or rather wicked resentments; offering us his own mercy and favour, freedom from hell, and everlasting happiness, on this, amongst other conditions, that we love our enemies.

Nay, farther, the duty in itself is so reasonable, that

the more sober of the Heathens, who had nothing above reason to teach them, have acknowledged it, if not as necessary, yet as highly becoming, and an eminent instance of a virtuous and generous mind. Plato could say, That injury is by no means to be done, nor to be repaid to him that has done it. And when a malicious person said to Zeno, Let me perish, if I don't do you a mischief; his answer was, Let me perish if I don't reconcile thee to me. Antoninus tells us frequently, That all reasonable creatures are born for one another; and that it is the part of justice to bear with others: That it is through ignorance they offend us, as not knowing the right way to their own happiness; and therefore we should rather instruct them better than hate them: That the best kind of revenge is, not to become like them in wickedness and malice. And many other excellent arguments does that royal philosopher bring to the same purpose. And Plutarch gives this as one of the reasons why God is so slow in punishing wicked persons, that we may learn meekness and patience by his example, adding that excellent observation, That our greatest happiness and perfection consists in the imitation of our maker.

But to leave the testimonies of heathens, the obligation of this precept of loving our enemies may be deduced from another, which every man will acknowledge to be highly reasonable, the doing to others what we would have done to ourselves. Every one of us desires to be loved and cherished by others; to have our faults pardoned, our failings overlooked, and our necessities supplied. Or, if any be so haughty and stubborn, that they disdain a courtesy from an enemy; yet I hope there is none so mad, but he desires the favour of God; whose hatred he deserves infinitely more, than his most bitter enemy can deserve his. How then can we think it unreasonable, to allow that to others, which ourselves expect and desire? Can we look that our master should forgive us ten thousand talents, if we take our fellow-servant by the throat, and hale him into prison for one hundred pence? Or with what confidence can we say,

pardon our sins, unless we be willing to add, that we pardon those who sin against us? Certainly, if it be reasonable to seek pardon, it is just and equal to give it; and nothing but blind selfishness, and extravagant partiality, can teach us to make so unreasonable a difference between ourselves and others.

Again, the reasonableness of this duty will farther appear, if we compare it with that malice and revenge which it does oppose. Can there be any thing more against natural reason, than to delight in an evil which can bring no benefit to us? Yet this is the very nature and essence of revenge: for, if the damage we sustain can be repaired, it is no revenge to seek it; and, if it cannot, it does no way alleviate the evil of the accident, that we draw him that caused it into as great a misery; nay, unless we are unnatural, and without bowels, it will augment our trouble to see any evil befall him. And he is a miserable person indeed, whose delight is in mischief, whose good is the evil of his neighbour. Yea, I may say, that he who returns an injury, is many times more unreasonable than he who offered it: for he who first wrongs another, hath commonly some temptation of advantage by it; which revenge cannot pretend to. But if he has done it out of mere malice, yet he is not worse than the other who returns it; there being as much fantastic pleasure in spite, as in revenge: both are alike miserable and extravagant.

And who are they against whom we bend our malice and revenge? Are they not men, partakers of the same nature, descended from the same stock with ourselves, fellow-citizens with us in this world, and with whom we should hope to live forever in a better? and should we not bear much with those who are so nearly related to us? Nay more, they are the workmanship of God's hands, and for any thing we know, either are, or may become his children and friends: and dare we pretend any love to God, if we do not spare them for his sake? And lastly, if they have done us any real wrong, they are in so far foolish, and destitute of reason: and who would quarrel with a madman? Certainly an injurious person

knows not what he is doing, for he can never wound his neighbour but through his own sides, nor prejudice another in a trifling interest, without hazarding his own eternal concernment; and therefore he deserves our pity rather than our hatred.

Much more might be brought to demonstrate the reasonableness of what our Saviour calls for in the text: but I hope what has been already said may suffice to stop the mouths of malicious and revengeful men, who are ready to quarrel with it. And, if this or any other duty seem absurd or unreasonable to us, we may learn the cause from the apostle, The carnal man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him. It is the carnality of our heart that makes it seem so: and therefore, instead of disputing the duty, let us endeavour to purify our souls, and open the eyes of our mind; and we shall find it to be true, which wisdom said of her doctrines, They are all plain to him that understandeth, and right to them that find knowledge.

But, in the third place, the love of enemies is not only necessary and reasonable, but also amiable and delightful; it has a great deal of pleasure and sweetness in it. Of this, I confess, the greatest evidence must be had from the experience and practice of it; the nature even of earthly pleasures being such, that only the enjoyment can make a man know them. But though the full knowledge hereof require a nearer acquaintance, yet even those who look at a distance may perceive something of amiableness in it, especially comparing it with the trouble and uneasiness of that vice it would deliver us from. Malice and revenge are the most restless and tormenting passions that can possess the mind; they keep it in continual hurry and disorder; they gnaw a man's heart with anguish and vexation, and imbitter all his enjoyments; they mar the pleasures of the day, and interrupt the repose of the night. Solomon describes these men, They sleep not except they have done mischief; and their sleep is taken away except they cause some to fall.

On the other hand, the meek and peaceable man, whose mind is brought to a compliance with this precept, is above the malice of his enemies. It is not in their power to vex him. Amidst all the assaults of injuries and affronts, he is firm as a rock, which no winds can shake; no waves remove. He is happy in the calmness and serenity of his spirit; and is sure either to convert or shame his adversary by his patience and friendly behaviour. And then the consciousness of performing his duty, and assurance of future reward, afford him infinitely more pure and solid pleasure and delight, than any can expect by indulging and gratifying their vengeful humour.

The advantages of this duty will more clearly appear, when we take a view of those prejudices which commonly are entertained against it; which shall be our next work.

First, then, some cry out upon this precept as enjoining impossibilities: doing violence to the very constitution of nature, and obliging men to a debt that no man is able to pay. They will tell you that it is as easy to hate ourselves, as to love our enemies; to love pain, as to bear an injury meekly: flesh and blood cannot endure it. What arrogance and presumption is this, thus to impeach the divine laws. It is impossible; therefore God should not have commanded it. Such is their reasoning. Were it not far more rational to argue thus: It is indispensably commanded, therefore it must needs be possible. And so it has been to all good men that ever lived; and so it will be, by God's assistance, to all that make it their study. Flesh and blood cannot do it. True enough; but then take this into the account, Flesh and blood shall never enter into the kingdom of heaven. It is indeed against the propension of our corrupt nature; but it is the work of Christians to mortify their corruptions. And if we think it impossible, at the command of God, and for the purchase of heaven, to love an enemy, and pardon an injury, how would we bear those hard trials which Christians have suffered by the cruelty of persecutors? Whether it is

easier to suffer a wrong, or to give our body to be burned? Certainly, when we have obeyed this precept, we have not yet resisted unto blood; and therefore that obedience can never be impossible, since harder things may be expected from us. Therefore seriously set about the work, and endeavour to bring your minds to a compliance with it; and then your own experience shall confute these idle pretences, and evince the possibility of the performance.

Another prejudice against this precept, is, That it seems to encourage injuries, by hopes of impunity and reward; giving the delinquent occasion to expect kindness and love, instead of the punishment which he deserves; and so we should draw upon ourselves a second injury by not requiting the first.

But we have already told you, that this precept does not forbid the exercise of justice by those to whom the sword is committed, when the public security calls for it. As a parent may at once love and correct his child, so may a judge be in charity with the person he does punish. And though it should be granted, that, by pardoning injuries, we do expose ourselves to new ones; yet would this amount to no more, but that we may suffer hardships by our obedience to God; which I hope is not enough to dispense with our duty. But truly the matter goes not commonly thus: for if we consult either our own observation, or the experience of others, we shall find, that meek and charitable persons are most seldom exposed to injuries, or engaged in troubles. He must needs be a desperately wicked person, who will offer a second injury to one who hath requited the first with kindness and love. Such a sweet disposition will mollify the hardest hearts, and charm the most froward humours; especially if we carry ourselves with such prudence and discretion, as may testify that we are actuated by a noble and generous charity, and not by a stupid insensibility. How often does a soft answer turn away wrath? and the overlooking of an injury prevent farther trouble, throwing water upon the spark before it break forth into a flame? Hence, if we look upon meek

and quiet persons, we shall ordinarily find them appy in the peace of their families, and favour and kindness of all their neighbours: whereas the angry, quarrelsome, and malicious person, is an eyesore to all about him; his neighbours shun him, his servants dread him, and all abhor and avoid him. And therefore the observation of this precept of our Lord, is so far from exposing us to new injuries, that by the mercy of God it will prove the best means to secure our tranquillity. Peace shall be the reward of a peaceable temper.

But, lastly, some will tell us, that the love of enemies and pardoning injuries, is inconsistent with the principles of honour; and will expose us to contempt and derision. But, alas! to what a sad pass are we come, if neither reason nor religion may prescribe the rules of honour; if our notions of it must be taken from the language of the sons of Belial, of strife and violence; if to imitate the Deity in his most glorious attribute of mercy and forgiveness, and become perfect as our Father which is in heaven is perfect, be accounted a base and dishonourable thing; and if from this vain, imaginary, fantastic shadow of reputation, we will violate all laws, human and divine, and forfeit eternal happiness. But who are they that will think the worse of you for your patience? Some vain empty fools, some profane atheistical wretches, whose judgments are not valuable, nor their praise worth the having. Or what can they say of you, but that you are meek and lowly, imitators of that blessed master whom we profess to serve? And why do we own the name of Christians, if we be ashamed of the spirit and life of christianity? Why do we not call ourselves after the name of Cain, Nimrod, or some other angry and revengeful destroyer, if we esteem those qualities more glorious and excellent? But if we have any deference for so wise a man and great a king as Solomon, he will tell us, that it is the honour of a man to cease from strife; and that he that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he who ruleth his spirit, better than he who taketh a city.

Thus you see how unreasonable those prejudices are

which keep men from the practice of this necessary duty. It remains now, that we hint at some helps for the performance of it.

The heathens were pretty ingenious in devising motives of patience. They would tell us, that if we were newly offended, it was too soon to resent it; if long time since, it was too late. If the offender be too strong for us, it were folly to contend; if he were too weak, it were a shame. Are we offended by a friend, let us remember our old friendship; if by an enemy, let us do him a kindness, and he will do so no more. But christianity will direct us to better means for composing the soul into the meekness and charity which it does require.

The first I shall recommend, is humility. Let us learn to have low thoughts of ourselves; and then we shall have both fewer enemies, and be more inclined to love them. Pride and selfconceit makes us overrate every petty injury, and inclines us to revenge: but if we consider what poor contemptible things we are in ourselves, and what we have deserved, if not from men, yet from God, whose instruments they are for our correction, we shall be little concerned at what the world calls affronts, and easily reconciled to those who have wronged us.

Secondly, let us learn to have a low esteem of the present world, and all things therein; and this will cut off the occasions of our hatred and animosities. Men may wrong us in our fortune or reputation, but they cannot rob us of piety and virtue, of the favour of God, and eternal happiness. And therefore, if our minds be once raised above those transitory vanities, we cannot meet with injuries worth the resenting. If we aim at heaven, and the glory of another world, we shall not stand to quarrel and contend about any trifling interest in our way thither.

Thirdly, the frequent and serious thoughts of death, would conduce much to allay our hatred, and dispose us to meekness and charity. Naturalists tell us, that when swarms of bees fight in the air, they are dispersed by

throwing dust among them. Did we in our thoughts often reflect upon that dust whereunto we must all shortly return, we should more easily lay down our quarrels, and animosities. While we contend about small things, little do we consider that death is coming on apace, and will swallow up the victor and the vanquished; him that is in the right, and him that is in the wrong. Look back upon the private contentions, or public commotions, which infested the world an hundred years ago. Where are they who managed them? They are all gone down into the dark and silent grave. Death hath decided their controversies, and within a few days it will do so with ours, and send us all to plead our cause before our great judge; and it will go ill with us, if we appear there in malice. Therefore, why should our hatred be long, since our life is so short? One would think we should find better employment for the short time we have to spend here.

But, lastly, and above all, let us propose to ourselves the blessed example of the holy Jesus, who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.

Let us frequently remember what great things he hath done and suffered for us poor sinful wretches; even while we were enemies and rebels to him; how that in all the passages of his life, and all the bloody scene of his sufferings, he was actuated by that same charity and love to his enemies which he calls for at our hands. It was this which moved him to descend from heaven, and clothe himself with the frailties of our nature, and endure the troubles of a calamitous life, and the pains of a bitter death, to deliver us from that eternal misery whereinto we had plunged ourselves. And may not his goodness and mercy to us, mollify our hearts, and overpower the corruption of our revengeful nature, and inspire us with earnest desires and resolutions to imitate his blessed example? After all that he hath done and suffered for us, can we be guilty of such a shameful ingratitude as to deny him this poor satisfaction and ac-

knowledgement, to pardon an enemy for his sake? Has he died for us when we were his enemies, and shall we refuse to live at peace with ours? Remember with what patience he endured the contradiction of sinners against himself; with what humility he did condescend to wash the feet of that wicked miscreant, who was at the same time resolved to betray him; with what mildness he did bear the supine negligence and stupidity of his disciples who slept in the time of his agony. What charity and meekness did he evidence towards those who sought his life! He could have called for legions of angels to destroy them, or made the earth to open her mouth and swallow them up: but he would not employ his miraculous power, save only for their good, restoring a servant's ear, and reproving the preposterous zeal of him who cut it off. Yea, while he hung upon the cross, and was approaching to the gates of death, all the cruel pains of body and far more intolerable pressure of spirit which he then sustained, did not lessen his wonderful tenderness and affection for his bloody murderers: Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do. Let us be frequent and serious in the meditation of these things. And if we have any veneration for the example of our Saviour, and any sense of his infinite mercy, this will dispose us to the practice of his precepts, and the obedience of his laws; and particularly the observation of this necessary, this reasonable, and delightful duty, that we love our enemies.

THE NECESSITY AND ADVANTAGE OF EARLY AFFLICTIONS.

LAM. III. 27, 28.

It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth. He sitteth alone and keepeth silence, because he hath borne it upon him.

THE great difference and contrariety between the maxims of the world, and those which religion doth propose, is in nothing more observable than in taking the measures of happiness and felicity. The world accounteth him a happy man who enjoyeth a perpetual calm and sunshine of prosperity; whose pleasant and joyful days are never overcast with any cloud, nor his tranquillity interrupted by any disastrous accident; and who was never acquainted with any other change, but that which brought him the new and fresh relish of succeeding pleasures and enjoyments. But religion hath taught us to look upon this as a condition full of danger; much more to be pitied than envied; to be feared than to be desired. It hath taught us to consider afflictions as instances of the divine goodness, as tokens and pledges of his love; (for whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth;) and that these severe dispensations are very necessary, and may prove useful and advantageous: Blessed is the man (saith the Psalmist) whom thou chasteneth, O Lord, &c.: It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I may learn thy statutes. And the Prophet in the text, It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth. He was at this time loaded with the heaviest weight of trouble and sorrow, what for the public calamities of his nation, and what for his own particular sufferings: [illegible]s were running down with rivers of water, for

the destructions of the daughter of his people; they trickled down, and ceased not. Judah was gone into captivity because of affliction: she dwelt among the Heathen, and found no rest; all her persecutors overtook her in the straits. The ways of Zion did mourn, because none came to the solemn feasts; the young and the old were lying on the ground in the streets; the virgins and young men were fallen by the sword, and the few that remained were starving for hunger. The people did sigh, and seek bread; they gave their pleasant things for meat to relieve their soul; the children and sucklings did swoon in the streets, their soul was poured out into their mother's bosom; the women did eat their fruit, their children of a span long. And the Prophet had a large share in these calamities, both by his own interest, and his compassion towards his neighbour: I am the man (saith he) that hath seen affliction by the rod of his wrath. Surely against me is he turned; he turneth his hand against me all the day.

But after he had thus bemoaned himself, and given some vent to his passion and sorrow, he puts a stop to the current that was grown too impetuous, and turns his thoughts another way. He acknowledgeth the justice of God's dispensations; and that it was a favour they suffered no more: This I recall into my mind, therefore have I hope. It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning. Nay, when he had further pondered the matter, he finds himself indebted to the goodness of God, even for the afflictions he endured: It is good for a man, &c.

The bearing of the yoke is an easy and obvious metaphor, importing the restraint of liberty, when our desires are denied, and we have not our wills; cannot ramble up and down as we please; and also the pressure of afflictions which gall and torment us, under which we smart and groan. Such is the yoke which the prophet tells us it is good for a man that he bear. A strange doctrine indeed to flesh and blood! and O how few do believe it! We judge of things by their outward appear-

ance, and as they affect us at present, (now no affliction or chastening seemeth for the present to be joyous, but grievous;) and we cannot persuade ourselves that there is any good in that which we feel to be troublesome and unpleasant. But, if we consult our reason and our faith, they will soon bring us to the acknowledgement of this truth, That affliction cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground. The crosses we meet with, are not the effects of blind chance; but the results of a wise and unerring providence, which knoweth what is fittest for us, and loveth us better than we can do ourselves. There is no malice or envy lodged in the bosom of that blessed being, whose name and nature is love. He taketh no delight in the troubles and miseries of his creatures: He doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men. It were infinitely unworthy of his wisdom and goodness, to please himself in seeing such poor creatures as we are, tossed up and down in the world, to behold our anguish, and hear our groans. It is our happiness and welfare which he designs in all his dispensations; and he maketh choice of the most proper and effectual means for that end. He seeth us wandering out of the way, ready to ruin and undo ourselves; and first he essayeth to reduce us by milder and more gentle methods: he trieth our gratitude and ingenuity, by all the endearments of mercy and goodness; he draweth us with the cords of love, and with the bands of a man. But if we break all these bands asunder, and cast away these cords from us; if we abuse his goodness, and turn his grace into wantonness; then, not only his justice, but his love to us, not only his hatred to sin but his affection unto us, will oblige him to alter his method, and take the rod in his hand, and try what severity can do. God's design in afflicting us is excellently expressed by the author to the Hebrews, chap. xii. ver. 10. He chasteneth us for our profit, that we may be partakers of his holiness. Holiness is the highest perfection and greatest happiness we are capable of: it is a real participation of the divine nature, the image of God drawn on the soul; and all the chastise-

ments we meet with, are designed to reduce us to this blessed temper, to make us like unto himself; and thereby capable to be happy with him to all eternity. This will more clearly appear, if we reflect on the natural temper of our minds, and the influence which prosperous or adverse fortune is wont to have upon them.

And, first, we are naturally proud and self-conceited; we have a high esteem of ourselves, and would have every body else to value and esteem us. This disease is very deeply rooted in our corrupt nature: it is ordinarily the first sin that bewrays itself in the little actions and passions of children; and many times the last which religion enables us to overcome. And such is the malignity of its nature, that it renders us odious and vile both in the sight of God and man. It cannot but be infinitely displeasing to that great and glorious Majesty, to see such silly creatures whom he hath brought forth out of nothing, and who are every moment ready to return into it again, and have nothing of their own but folly, and misery, and sin; to see such creatures I say, either so blind as to value themselves, or so unreasonable as to desire others to value them. Good men must needs hate us for it, because God doth so; and evil men hate us for it, because they are proud themselves, and so are jealous of the attempts of others to exalt themselves, as of that which tendeth to depress and diminish them. Pride alone is the source and fountain of almost all the disorders in the world; of all our troubles, and of all our sins: and we shall never be truly happy, or truly good, till we come to think nothing of ourselves, and be content that all the world think nothing of us. Now, there is nothing hath a more natural tendency to foment and heighten this natural corruption, than constant prosperity and success. The Psalmist, speaking of the prosperity of the wicked, who are not in trouble as others, neither are they plagued like other men, presently subjoineth the effect, Therefore pride compasseth them about as a chain. Sanctified afflictions contribute to abate and mortify the pride of our hearts, to prick the swelling imposthume, to make us sensible of our weak-

ness, and convince us of our sins. Thus doth God open the ears of men, and seal their instruction, that he may withdraw man from his purpose, and hide pride from man. And if they be bound in fetters, and be holden in cords of affliction; then he showeth them their work, and their transgressions that they have exceeded. Afflictions do both put us on the search to find out the offences wherewith we have provoked God, and make us more sensible of the heinousness and malignity of their nature: I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus, Thou hath chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the Lord my God. Surely after I was chastised, I repented; and after I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh: I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth.

Another distemper of our minds, is our too great affection to the world and worldly things. We are all too apt to set our hearts wholly upon them; to take up our rest, and seek our happiness and satisfaction in them. But God knows, that these may well divert and amuse a while, they can never satisfy or make us happy; that the souls which he made for himself, can never rest, till they return unto him: and therefore he many times findeth it necessary, either to remove our comforts, or imbitter them unto us; to put aloes and wormwood on the breasts of the world, that thereby we may wean ourselves from it, and carry them to the end of their being, the fountain of their blessedness and felicity. The few and little comforts of this life, (saith a person of great quality and worth,) notwithstanding all the troubles and crosses with which they are interlarded, are apt to keep the hearts even of good men in too great love of this world. What would become of us, if our whole life should be altogether prosperous and contenting, without any intermixture of crosses and afflictions? It is too probable we should never look any farther; but conclude, with Peter on the mount of transfiguration, Lord, it is good to be here. As Almighty God hath a very great

affection to us, so he is very desirous of our love; not that it bringeth any advantage to him, but because it is our greatest happiness and perfection. He bestoweth his mercies to gain our hearts; but, when we begin to doat on the gifts, and forget the giver, he becomes jealous, and takes them away, that he may not have any rival in our affection. And certainly it is no small advantage to have our hearts in any measure loosened from the world, disentangled from every thing here below. *Quocunque pretio bene emitur:* He makes a good purchase who obtains it, let it cost him never so dear.

Another bad effect which prosperity is wont to produce in our corrupt nature, is, that it makes us forgetful of God, and unthankful of his mercies. When second causes answer our expectations and desires, we are seldom wont to look beyond them: we never regard the fountain till the cisterns begin to fail. This it was that made Agur to pray against a plentiful fortune, lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord? When the weather is fair, and the sails are filled with a prosperous gale, the rough and stubborn mariners are seldom at their devotion; but when the storm is risen, and the sea begins to swell, and every wave threateneth to devour them: then they cry to the Lord in their trouble, as on him who can alone deliver them out of their distress. The Psalmist speaking of their stiff-necked and rebellious predecessors, tells us, that when God slew them, then they sought him; and they remembered that God was their rock, and the high God their redeemer. In their affliction (saith the Lord by the Prophet) they will seek me early. I doubt not a great many devout persons will acknowledge, that it was some affliction or other that first taught them to pray. And as afflictions contribute to make us remember our dependence on God, and then excite us to seek unto him; so also they render us more sensible of our obligations unto him, and more thankful for the mercies he hath bestowed on us. We are so dull and insensible, that we seldom value any of the divine mercies, till we find what it is to want them. We put very little value on our food and rai-

ment, and the ordinary means of our subsistence, unless we have been sometimes pinched with want. We consider not how much we are indebted to God for preserving our friends, till some of them be removed from us. How little do we prize our health, if we have never had experience of sickness or pain! Where is the man who doth seriously bless God for his nightly quiet and repose? And yet, if sickness or trouble deprive us of it, we then find it to have been a great and valuable mercy, and that it is God who giveth his beloved sleep.

Once more, prosperity rendereth us insensible of the miseries and calamites of others. Those who were at ease in Zion, did not grieve for the afflictions of Joseph. But afflictions do soften the heart, and make it more tender and kindly; and we are always most ready to compassionate those griefs which ourselves have sometime endured: the sufferings of others make the deepest impressions upon us, when they put us in mind of our own. It is mentioned as a powerful motive to engage the children of Israel to be kind and merciful to strangers, that they knew very well the heart of a stranger, having been strangers themselves in Egypt. Now, this tender and compassionate temper doth well become a Christian, whose duty it is to weep with those that weep and to have as deep a sense and feeling of the griefs of others, as he is wont to have of his own.

These and many more advantages do sanctified and well-improved afflictions bring to a Christian; on the account of which it is good for him that he hath borne the yoke. But I hasten to that which is mentioned in the text. Only by the way (that I may not need to return) let me take notice of the season which is here mentioned as the fittest for a man to bear affliction: It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth.

We are all willing to put off the evil day; and, if we must needs bear the yoke, we would choose to have it delayed till we grow old. We think it sad to have our morning overcast with clouds, to meet with a storm before we have well launched forth from the shore. We are wont to indulge and applaud children and young

folks in their frolics and jovial humours; and tell them, they will have time enough for cares and troubles when they grow older: we turn that irony of Solomon's into a serious advice, Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and walk in the ways of thy heart, and the sight of thine eyes. But the divine wisdom, which knoweth what is fit for us, doth many times make choice of our younger years, as the most proper to accustom us to the bearing of the yoke. And a little consideration will make us discover the advantages of this season for suffering afflictions; they being at that time most necessary, most tolerable, and most advantageous. First, I say, they are then most necessary. For youth is the time of our life wherein we are in greatest danger to run into wild and extravagant courses: our blood is hot, and our spirits unstaid and giddy; we have too much pride to be governed by others, and too little wisdom to govern ourselves. The yoke is then especially needful to tame our wildness, and reduce us to a due staidness and composure of mind. Then also it is most supportable. The body is strong and healthful, less apt to be affected with the troubles of the mind; the spirit stout and vigorous, will not so easily break and sink under them. Old age is a burden, and will soon faint under any supervenient load. The smallest trouble is enough to bring down gray hairs with sorrow to the grave. And therefore, since we must meet with afflictions, it is certainly a favourable circumstance, to have them at the time of our life wherein we are most able to endure them. And, lastly, the lessons which afflictions teach us, are then most advantageous when we learn them betimes, that we may have the use of them in the conduct of our after lives. An early engagement into the ways of religion is a great felicity; and the means whereby this is to be effected can never be too soon administered. Youth is more soft and pliable; and evil dispositions are more easily cured, before time and custom have hardened us in them. A tree needs little force to bend it when it is young; and there needeth the less of the rod, if the child be brought under discipline betimes.

And thus on many accounts it is good for a man to bear the yoke in his youth.

We proceed to the particular advantage of afflictions which is mentioned in the text: He sitteth alone and keepeth silence, because he hath borne it upon him. The words are capable of a twofold interpretation, and both suit well with the purpose: for we may either understand them properly, of solitude and silence; or metaphorically, of patience and quiet submission; both of which are the good effects of sanctified and well-improved afflictions: and accordingly we shall say something to both. Nature hath made us sociable creatures; but corruption hath carried this inclination unto excess; so that most persons think it an intolerable burden to be any considerable time alone. Though they love themselves out of measure, yet they cannot endure their own conversation; they had rather be hearing and discoursing of the most naughty and trivial things, than be sitting alone and holding their peace. Outward prosperity heightens this humour. When the heart is dilated with joy, it seeketh to vent itself in every company. When a man is free of trouble and cares, he thinks of nothing but how to please himself with variety of diversions and conversations. Crosses, on the other hand, render a man pensive and solitary; they stop the mouth, and bind up the tongue, and incline the person to be much alone. Sadness makes his company disagreeable to others, and he findeth theirs as little agreeable to him: He sitteth alone and keepeth silence, because he hath borne it upon him. Thus the same prophet said, I sat not in the assembly of the mockers, nor rejoiced: I sat alone because of thine hand.

Now, he who considers, on the one hand, the guilt we are wont to contract, and the prejudice which we sustain, by too much conversation with others, and, on the other hand, the excellent improvement we may make of solitude and retirement, will account it a good effect of afflictions, that they incline and dispose us unto it. In considering the evils of frequent conversation, we are not to prosecute the grosser and more scandalous

vices of the tongue. It might seem a poor commendation of solitude and silence, that a man is not swearing, or lying, or scolding, or talking profanely when he is alone: a man may converse enough, and keep himself free from these. We rather choose to mention such evils as are wont to be less noticed, and can be more hardly avoided.

And, first, experience may teach us all, that much conversation doth ordinarily beget a remissness and dissolution of spirit; that it slackeneth and relaxeth the bent of our minds, and disposeth us to softness and easy compliances. We find it hard enough at any time to compose our spirits to that staidness and severity which religion doth require: but if we be too much in company with others, it is almost impossible to maintain it. That cheerfulness and complaisance which is judged necessary to render conversation agreeable, doth easily degenerate into levity and sin: and we are very ready to displease our maker, when we are too intent on pleasing our friends. This loose frame and dissipation of mind, which society doth occasion, made a good man complain, *Ex hominum consortio semper venio minus homo:* that he always came out of company less a man.

Another prejudice we receive by society, is, that it fills our minds with noxious images, and fortifies our corrupt notions and opinions of things. Our hearts are naturally too much addicted to the things of the world; we mind them too much, and put too high a value upon them: and the discourses we hear redouble the temptation, by bringing them continually into our thoughts, and setting them off to the greatest advantage. When we are alone in a sober temper, and take time to reflect and consider of things, we are sometimes persuaded of the vanity and worthlessness of all those glittering trifles whereunto the generality of mankind are so sadly bewitched: but when we come abroad, and listen to the common talk, and hear people speak of greatness, and riches, and honour, with concern and admiration, we quickly forget our more sober and deliberate thoughts,

and suffer ourselves to be carried away with the stream of the common opinion. And though the effects be not so sudden and observable, yet these discourses are still making some secret and insensible impressions, upon us.

Thus also is our judgment corrupted about the qualities and endowments of the mind. Courage and gallantry, wit and eloquence, and other accomplishments of this nature, are magnified and extolled beyond all measure; whereas humility, and meekness, and devotion, and all those Christian graces which render a soul truly excellent and lovely, are spoken of as mean and contemptible things: for though men have not the impudence formally to make the comparison, and prefer the former; yet their very air, and way of discoursing about these things, sufficiently testifies their opinion. With what affection and concernment will they represent a gallant or learned man; but how faintly do they utter the character of a good man! And so, in censuring men's failings, they exaggerate the smallest instances of weakness or imprudence, but speak lightly enough of the greatest crimes. Drunkenness and whoredom are mentioned in such terms as express little sense of their heinous nature; and tend to lessen the horror we should have of them. Ambition and revenge, and such other plausible vices, are rather allowed than condemned. And while we converse in the world, and are accustomed to such representations of things, our judgments are thereby exceedingly corrupted, and we entertain false and pernicious maxims. And so hard it is to guard ourselves against the contagion, that we had better sit alone and keep silence, than be continually exposed to the temptation.

I shall mention but another of those evils wherewith our conversation is commonly attended. The most ordinary subject of our entertainments are the faults and follies of others. *Itur in verba, scrmo seritur, vita aliena, describitur:* We meet and talk, and fall to describe the life and deportment of others. Were this one theme of discourse discharged, we would oft-times

find but little to say. I scarce know any fault whereof good persons are so frequently guilty, and so little sensible. They know perhaps the things are true, and they have no malicious design in reporting them; they tell them only as they do the public news, to divert themselves, and gratify their friends. But, would we consult our own hearts, and apply the great rule of righteousness, of doing unto others as we would be done unto ourselves, we should soon be convinced of a great deal more guilt and sinfulness in such discourses than we are wont to apprehend. How ill do we take it to have our own failings thus exposed, and to hear that any person hath made as bold with us as we are wont to make with others? Again, how loth would we be, that the persons of whom we speak so freely, should overhear our discourse, or be informed of it? Now, if the practice had nothing blamable in it, why should we be so shy to avow it?

I have only hinted at these things: but he who shall seriously ponder them, will acknowledge, there is no little prejudice even in those entertainments which pass for very innocent in the world; and that he shunneth much guilt and many snares who sitteth alone and keepeth silence. But solitude and retirement do not only deliver us from these inconveniences, but also afford very excellent opportunities for bettering our souls. Those hours we mispend in needless visits and idle talk, if rightly improved, might set us a great way forward on our journey to heaven. While we are too busy in making or entertaining acquaintance with men, we many times fall out of acquaintance both with God and ourselves.

The most profane and irreligious persons will find some serious thoughts rise in their minds if they be much alone. And the more that any person is advanced in piety and goodness, the more will he delight in retirement, and receive the more benefit by it. Then it is that the devout soul takes its highest flight in divine contemplations and maketh its nearest approaches to God. I find the vulgar Latin rendereth the words

of the text, *Sedebit solitarius et tacebit, quia levavit se supra se:* The solitary person will sit still and hold his peace, because he hath lifted up himself above himself: raised his spirit above his ordinary pitch. *In solitudine* (saith one of the fathers) *aer purior, cœlum apertius, familiarior Deus:* In solitude we breathe, as it were, in a purer air, heaven is more open unto us, and God is more familiar and frequent in his visits. To which purpose some have applied that of the Prophet Hosea, Behold I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and there speak comfortably unto her; or, as the original importeth, I will speak unto her heart. That rule which our Saviour giveth for our devotion, to enter into our closet, and shut the door behind us, is as necessary to preserve us from distraction, as from vanity and ostentation. When we have retired as much as we can from the world, we do still carry too much of it along with us. The images of things do sufficiently persecute and disturb us, though we be not exposed to the objects themselves. Our blessed Saviour thought not the mountains and deserts retired enough for his devotions; but would add the darkness and silence of the night. Little doth the world understand those secret and hidden pleasures which devout souls do feel, when, having got out of the noise and hurry of the world, they sit alone and keep silence, contemplating the divine perfections, which shine so conspicuously in all his works of wonder; admiring his greatness, and wisdom, and love, and revolving his favours towards themselves; opening before him their griefs and their cares, and disburdening their souls into his bosom; protesting their allegiance and subjection unto him, and telling him a thousand times that they love him; and then listening unto the voice of God within their hearts, that still and quiet voice, which is not wont to be heard in the streets, that they may hear what God the Lord will speak: for he will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints, and visit them with the expressions of his love. No wonder if those blessed souls who have tasted the pleasures of holy retirement, and found themselves, as it

were, in the suburbs of heaven, grow weary of company and affairs, and long for the returning of those happy hours, as the hireling for the shades of the evening: no wonder they pity the foolish busy world, who spend their days in vanity, and know not what it is indeed to live.

But here I would not be mistaken, as if I recommended a total and constant retirement, or persuaded men to forsake the world, and betake themselves unto deserts. No, certainly; we must not abandon the stations wherein God hath placed us, nor render ourselves useless to mankind. Solitude hath its temptations, and we may be sometimes very bad company to ourselves. It was not without reason that a wise person warned another, who professed to delight in conversing with himself, *Vide ut cum homine probo:* Have a care that you be keeping company with a good man. Abused solitude may whet men's passions, and irritate their lusts, and prompt them to things which company would restrain. And this made one say, that he who is much alone, must either be a saint or devil. Melancholy, which inclines men most to retirement, is often too much nourished and fomented by it; and there is a peevish and sullen loneliness, which some people affect under their troubles, whereby they feed on discontented thoughts, and find a kind of perverse pleasure in refusing to be comforted. But all this says no more, but that good things may be abused; and excess or disorder may turn the most wholesome food into poison. And therefore, though I would not indifferently recommend much solitude unto all; yet, sure, I may say, it were good for the most part of men that they were less in company, and more alone.

Thus much of the first and proper sense of sitting alone and keeping silence. We told you it might also import a quiet and patient submission to the will of God; the laying of our hand on our mouth, that no expression of murmur or discontent may escape us. I was dumb, said the Psalmist, I opened not my mouth; because thou didst it. And the Prophet describeth our

Saviour's patience, that he was oppressed, and was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he was brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before the shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth. Indeed a modest and unaffected silence is a good way to express our submission to the hand of God under afflictions. The Heathen moralists, who pretend much to patience, could never hold their peace; but desired always to signalize themselves by some fetches of wit, and expressions of unusual courage. But certainly the mute and quiet Christian behaveth himself much better. *Locquacissimum illud silentium:* That eloquent and expressive silence saith more than all their vain and Stoical boastings. We cannot now insist in any length on this Christian duty of patience, and submission to the will of God; we shall only say two things of it, which the text importeth. First, that this lesson is most commonly learned in the school of afflictions: He sitteth alone and keepeth silence, because he hath borne it upon him. In that forecited place of Jeremiah xxxi. 18. Ephraim bemoaning himself, acknowledgeth that he had been as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke; which maketh the greater reluctancy against it. Children that are much indulged, are the more impatient if they come to be crossed; and there is too much of the child in us all. The Apostle tells us, that tribulation worketh patience. Custom makes every thing more tolerable unto us; and if it please God to sanctify the first stroke, the second is received with the greater submission. The other thing I have to say on this duty, is, that this advantage of afflictions is very great and desirable; that it is indeed very good for a man to have borne the yoke in his youth, if he hath thereby learned to sit alone and keep silence when the hand of the Lord is upon him. There is nothing more acceptable unto God, no object more lovely and amiable in his eyes, than a soul thus prostrate before him, thus entirely resigned unto his holy will, thus quietly submitting to his severest dispensations. Nor is it less advantageous unto ourselves; but sweeteneth the bitterest occurrences of our life, and

makes us relish an inward and secret pleasure, notwithstanding all the smart of affliction: so that the yoke becomes supportable, the rod itself comforts us; and we find much more delight in suffering the will of God, than if he had granted us our own. Now, to this God who loveth us, and correcteth us for our profit, that we may be partakers of his holiness, and thereby of his happiness; to God the Father, Son, and blessed Spirit, be all honour, praise, and glory, now and for ever. *Amen.*

THAT THERE ARE BUT A SMALL NUMBER SAVED.

LUKE XIII. 23.

Then said one unto him, Lord, are there few that be saved? And he said unto them, &c.

THOSE who have so much charity and goodness as to be nearly touched with the interests of mankind, cannot but be more especially concerned about their everlasting condition; and very anxious to know what shall become of poor mortals when this scene is over, and they cease to appear on the stage of the world, being called off to give an account of their deportment on it. And, seeing we are assured that there are different, and very opposite estates of departed souls, some being admitted into happiness, and others doomed to misery, beyond any thing that we can conceive; this may put them upon farther inquiry, how mankind is like to be divided? whether heaven or hell shall have the greater share? Such a laudable curiosity as this it was, that put one of our blessed Saviour's followers to propose the question in the text. Lord, are there few that be saved? Our Saviour had been lately foretelling the great success the gospel should have; how, like a little leaven that quickly fermenteth the whole lump it is put into, Chris-

tianity should soon propagate itself through the world, and many nations embrace the profession of it. This disciple, it seems, was desirous to know, whether the efficacy should be answerable to the extent? whether it should take as deep root in the hearts of those that owned it, as it was to spread itself far and wide on the face of the earth? in a word, whether the greatest part of men were to be saved by it? I called this a laudable curiosity; and there is reason to think it so, since our Saviour himself, who best knew the occasion and importance of it, doth not check, but satisfy the inquiry; which he was wont to do when the questions were useless or blamable. Those who inquired into the time of the general judgment, received no other accqunt, but that it was *inter arcana imperii;* among those secrets which God reserved for himself. And, again, when they asked of the time that the kingdom should be restored unto Israel, he tells them roundly, it was not for them, it concerned them not at all to know such things as these. But here, as the question seems to have proceeded from a zeal to the honour of God, and concernment in the happiness of mankind; so the resolution of it might be very useful: and accordingly it is improved by our Saviour; who at once resolves the doubt, and presseth a very weighty exhortation, in the following words, Strive to enter in, &c. We are not at this time to prosecute the whole importance of this latter verse; for that we refer you to an excellent sermon, entitled, The way to happiness. We shall only consider the answer which is implied in it to the foregoing question; to wit, that the number of those who are to be saved is really small.

It is on this point we design to fix our meditations at this time. And indeed there is scarce any doctrine that needeth to be more inculcated: for, amongst all the stratagems whereby the great enemy of mankind doth plot and contrive their ruin, few are more unhappily successful, than the fond persuasion he hath filled them with, that heaven and everlasting happiness are easily attainable. What one saith of wisdom, *Multi*

ad sapientiam pervenissent nisi putassent se pervenisse, we may, with a little alteration, apply unto this purpose; That many might have reached heaven, if they had not been so confident of it. The doors of the Christian church are now very wide, and men have access unto them upon easy terms: nay this privilege descends unto men by their birth, and they are reckoned among Christians before they come well to know what it means. The ordinances and mysteries of our religion are common to all, save those whom gross ignorance or notorious crimes do exclude. There are no marks on the foreheads of men whereby we can judge of their future condition: they die, and are laid in their graves, and none cometh back to tell how it fareth with them; and we desire to think the best of every particular person. But, whatever charity be in this, there is little prudence in the inference that many draw from it, who think that they may live as their neighbours do, and die as happily as they; and, since the greatest part of men are such as themselves, heaven must be a very empty place if all of them be debarred. Thus perhaps you have seen a flock of sheep on a bridge, and the first leapeth over, and the rest, not knowing what is become of those that went before, do each of them follow their companions into that hazard or ruin. Interest and self-love do so strongly blind the minds of men, that they can hardly be put from the belief of that which they would very fain have true. Hence it is, that, notwithstanding of all we are told to the contrary; the opinion of the broadness of the way that leads to heaven, and the easy access unto it, is still the most epidemic, and I think the most dangerous heresy. Many of the commonalty are so ignorant as to avow it; and the strange security of more knowing persons doth as loudly proclaim it. I know he undertakes an unwelcome errand, who goes about to dispossess the minds of men of such a pleasant and flattering error. But what shall we do! Shall we suffer them to sleep on and take their rest, till the everlasting flames awake them? Shall we draw their blood on our heads, and involve

ourselves in their ruin, by neglecting to advertise them of their hazard? No, my friends: duty doth oblige us, and the holy Scriptures will warrant us to assure you, that there are very few that shall be saved; that the whole world lieth in wickedness; and that they are a little flock to whom the Father will give the kingdom.

That this certain, though lamentable truth may take the deeper impression on our minds, we shall first propose some considerations for the better understanding what great things are required in those who look for everlasting happiness, and then reflect on the actions and ways of men; that, comparing the one with the other, we may see how little ground of hope there is for the greatest part to build on.

First, then, consider the nature of that divine Majesty, whose presence and enjoyment it is that makes heaven desirable; and think how inconsistent it is with his infinite holiness, to admit impure and impenitent sinners into the habitation of his glory. Certainly he is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity. He is not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness: neither shall evil dwell with him. The foolish shall not stand in his sight. It is strange what conceptions foolish men entertain of Almighty God, who imagine, that those who have been all their days wallowing in sin, shall be admitted into an everlasting fellowship with him. Sooner shall light and darkness dwell together, and heat and cold in their greatest violence combine, and all contrarieties of nature be reconciled. Can two walk together except they be agreed? Can there be any converse between those whose natures suit so ill together? Sure they who think to come so easily by happiness, must imagine God altogether such a one as themselves; else they could never hope that he would choose them, and cause them approach unto him. But O how widely shall they find themselves mistaken, when he shall reprove them, and set their sins in order before them: and they shall find to their confusion, that he is a consuming fire to all the workers of iniquity! Men are wont to frame a notion of God according to their

own wishing, as if he were but an empty name: and this is the common shelter against every convincing reproof. But this temerity shall at length sufficiently confute itself, and feel that justice which it will not believe. There is not strife among the attributes of God, that one of them shall swallow up another. Mercy is open to all that forsake their sins, but justice shall seize on those who continue in them. That compassion which made God to give his dearest Son for the redemption of mankind, will never prevail for the pardon and deliverance of any impenitent sinner. Abused goodness will certainly turn into fury; and infinite mercy, being despised, shall bring down upon sinners all the dreadful effects of an omnipotent vengeance.

Consider, secondly, what that happiness is which every body doth so confidently promise to themselves; and see whether it be likely that it should be so easily attained. Glorious things are everywhere spoken of that heavenly Jerusalem; and all that is excellent or desirable in this world, is borrowed to shadow it forth in the holy Scriptures: we are told of crowns, and kingdoms, and treasures, and rivers of pleasure, and fountains of living waters, and of an exceeding eternal weight of glory.

But all these do not suffice to convey into our minds any full apprehension of the happiness we expect; and, after all that can be said, it doth not yet appear what we shall be. These metaphors and allegories serve but to assist our minds a little, and give us some confused apprehensions of the things eye hath not seen, nor ear heard; nor can it enter into the heart of men to conceive, what God hath prepared for them that love him, said that beloved disciple that lay in the bosom of our Saviour. Can we then expect that so glorious a prize shall be gained without any labour? Shall such a recompense be bestowed on those who never were at any pains about it? What toil and travail doth it cost a man to gather together that white and yellow earth which they call money? With what care and pains do others ascend to any degree of preferment? What industry and study

do men employ to reach a little knowledge, and be reckoned amongst the learned? And shall heaven and everlasting happiness slide into our arms when we are asleep? No, certainly. God will never disparage the glories of that place, to bestow them on those who have not thought them worthy of their most serious endeavours. But as the greatness of that happiness may justly discourage all the lazy pretenders to it, so the nature of it leaves small ground of hope to the greatest part of the world. I wonder what most men do expect to meet with in heaven, who dream of coming thither. Think they to feast and revel, and luxuriate there, and to spend eternity in foolish mirth, and vain talk; in sport and drollery, and sensual pleasure; which are all the exercises they are capable of, or find relish or satisfaction in? Away with all those Turkish notions, whereby we disparage the happiness we pretend to. The joys of that place are pure and spiritual, and no unclean thing shall enter there. The felicity of blessed spirits standeth in beholding and admiring the divine perfections, and finding the image of them shining in themselves, in a perfect conformity of the will and nature of God, and an intimate and delightful society and communion with him: and shall such souls be blessed in seeing and partaking of the divine likeness, who never loved it, and would choose any thing rather than to converse with him? A little reflection on the common temper of men's minds may assure us, that they are very far from that meetness and aptitude for the inheritance of the saints in light which the Apostle speaks of. The notion and nature of blessedness must sure be changed, or else the temper of their spirits: either they must have new hearts, or a new heaven created for them, before they can be happy. It is a strange infatuation of self love, that men in the gall of bitterness should think it is well with their souls, and fancy themselves in a case good enough for the enjoyment of divine pleasures.

In the fourth place, Let us reflect on the attempts and endeavours of those who have gone to heaven be-

fore us; how they did fight and strive, wrestle and run, for obtaining that glorious prize; and we shall see how improbable it is, that the greatest part of men should come by it with so little pains. Noah, Abraham, Jacob, David, and all those ancient worthies recorded in holy writ, have either done or suffered so great things, as gave ground to expect that country they looked after, accounting themselves strangers and pilgrims on the earth; as you may see in the 11th chapter of Hebrews: where, after a large catalogue of their performances, the author tells us of others, who were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. And others had trial of cruel mockings, and scourgings, yea moreover, of bonds and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheep-skins, and goat-skins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented: of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. Such also was that holy violence wherewith the Christians of the first and golden ages did force open the gates of heaven, and took possession of it. The ardent affection wherewith these blessed souls were inflamed towards their maker and redeemer, made them willingly give up their bodies to be burned in the fire, for the glory of God, and the propagation of the Christian faith. Their constancy in their sufferings did amaze their bloody persecutors, and outweary the cruelty of their tormentors: and they rejoiced in nothing more, than that they were accounted worthy to suffer shame for the name of Jesus. And what shall we say of their universal charity and love, which reached their very enemies? of their humility and meekness, justice and temperance, and all those other virtues which many of the Heathens themselves did observe and admire? Behold, saith one, how the Christians love one another! These are the men, saith another, who speak as they think, and do as they speak. Pliny, after an exact inquiry, writeth to Trajan the Emperor, That he could never find any other guilt in the

Christians, but that they met together before daybreak, to sing a hymn to Christ, as if he were God; and then to bind themselves with a sacrament or oath, not to do any mischief; but, on the contrary, that they shall not rob, steal, or commit adultery, or falsify their words, or deny their trust, &c. This was the crime of Christians in those first ages, to engage themselves not to commit any crime. And if it fell out that any of them were guilty of drunkenness, or uncleanness, or any other of those sins, which, alas! are so lightly censured in our days, they were severely punished: nay, how bitterly did themselves lament it! They needed not in those days to be pursued by tedious processes, or dragged against their will to the profession of their repentance. They would sue for it with tears, and stand many years at the door of the church, begging to be received. The censures of the church were then looked upon as very serious and dreadful things: and they who would encounter death in the most terrible form, would tremble if threatened with excommunication. Now, tell me, I pray you, what you think of these men? Did they supererogate, and go beyond their duty? or were they fools in doing these things, when half the pains might have served the turn? Did heaven and happiness cost them so much labour, and think you to be carried fast asleep, or rather while you are bending your forces quite another way! If you cannot look so far back, or if you imagine these but romances, like the poetic accounts of the golden age, wherein all men were happy and good, I shall then desire you to take notice of a few persons, whom the divine goodness hath rescued from that deluge of wickedness which overfloweth the world. There are perhaps some two or three in a city, or in a country, who live very far beyond the common rate of men, and may be accounted angels upon earth, if compared with them. They have escaped the pollution that is in the world, and have learned to despise all the vanities of it; their affections are above, and their greatest business is, to please and serve their maker; their thoughts and affections are in

a great measure holy and pure, their converse innocent and useful, and in their whole deportment they observe such strict rules of holiness and virtue, as others may think needless or superstitious: and yet these persons are deeply sensible of their own imperfections, and afraid enough to come short of heaven. I speak not now of those scrupulous persons whom melancholy doth expose unto perpetual and unaccountable fears; much less of others, who make a trade of complaining, and would be the better thought of for speaking evil of themselves, and would be very ill pleased if you should believe them. I speak of rational and sober men, whose fears arise from their due consideration and measures of things, from the right apprehensions they have of the holiness of God, and the meaning and importance of the gospel-precepts. And certainly such holy jealousies over themselves ought not to be judged needless; since St. Paul himself, who had been rapt up into the third heaven, and thereby received an earnest of eternal happiness, found it necessary to take care, lest that by any means, while he preached to others, himself should be a cast-away. I know it is ordinary for men to laugh at those who are more serious and conscientious than themselves, to wonder what they aim at, and to hope to be as sure of heaven as they. But ere long they shall discover their mistake, and shall say, with those spoken of in the book of Wisdom, This was he whom we had sometimes in derision, and a proverb of reproach. We fools accounted his life madness, and his end to be without honour. How is he numbered among the children of God, and his lot is among the saints! Therefore have we erred from the way of truth, and the light of righteousness hath not shined unto us, and the sun of righteousness rose not upon us.

To come yet closer unto our present purpose, a serious consideration of the laws and precepts of the gospel, will fully convince us of the straightness of the gate, and narrowness of the way that leads unto eternal life. We cannot name them all, nor insist upon an at length. Look through that excellent sermon on

the mount, and see what our Saviour doth require of his followers. You will find him injoining such a profound humility, as shall make us think nothing of ourselves, and be content that others think nothing of us; a meekness which no injuries can overcome, no affronts nor indignities can exasperate; a chastity which restraineth the sight of the eyes, and the wandering of the desires; such an universal charity as will make us tender other men's welfare as our own, and never to take any revenge against our most bitter enemies, but to wish them well, and to do them all the good we can, whether they will or not. Whatever corrupt glosses men are bold to put on our Saviour's words, the offering the other cheek to him who smote the one, and the giving our coat to him who hath taken our cloak, doth oblige us to suffer injuries, and part with something of our right, for avoiding strife and contention. The pulling out our right eye and cutting off our right hand that offends, doth import the renouncing of the most gainful callings, or pleasant enjoyments, when they become a snare unto us, and the use of all those corporal austerities that are necessary for the restraint of our lust and corrupt affections. The hating of father and mother for the sake of Christ, doth at least imply the loving of him infinitely beyond our dearest relations, and the being ready to part with them when either our duty or his will doth call for it. And we must not look upon these things as only counsels of perfection, commendable in themselves, but which may yet be neglected without any great hazard. No, certainly; they are absolutely necessary: and it is folly to expect happiness without the conscientious and sincere performance of them all. Whosoever shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven; that is, according to all interpreters, he shall have no interest in it. You see then by what strict rules he must square his actions, who can with any ground hope to be saved. But now I must tell you further; that he must not be put to the performance of his duty merely by the force and sanc-

tions of these laws. True religion is an inward, free, and self-moving principle; and those who have made a progress in it, are not acted only by external motives, are not merely driven by threatenings, nor bribed by promises, nor constrained by laws; but are powerfully inclined to that which is good. Though holy and religious persons do much eye the law of God; yet it is not so much the authority and sanction of it, as its reasonableness, and purity, and goodness, that doth prevail with them. They account it excellent and desirable in itself, and that in keeping of it there is a great reward; and that divine love wherewith they are acted, makes them become a law unto themselves: *Quis legem det amantibus? Major est amor lex ipse sibi.* In a word, what our blessed Saviour said of himself, is in some measure applicable to his followers, that it is their meat and drink to do their Father's will. And as the natural appetite is carried out towards food, though we should not reflect on the necessity of it for the preservation of our lives; so are they carried with a natural and unforced propension towards that which is good and commendable.

Hitherto we have been speaking of those qualifications which are necessary for obtaining an entrance into heaven: It is high time we were casting our eyes upon the world, to see how the tempers and actions of men agree with them. And if first we look back upon the old world, we shall see how soon wickedness did overspread the face of the earth, and all flesh had corrupted their way; and of all the multitudes that were then in the world, only Noah and his family were found worthy to escape the general deluge; nay even in it there was a cursed Cham, the father of a wicked generation. After that the church of God was confined to a very narrow corner; and while darkness covered the face of the earth, only Palestine was enlightened with the knowledge of God: He showed his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel. But he dealt not so with every nation: as for his judgments, they have not known them. They were given up to the

lusts of their own hearts, and worshipped the works of their own hands. Their devotions were performed unto devils, and their religious mysteries were full of the grossest impurities. I shall not now enter on the debate, Whether ever any Heathen might possibly have been saved? We are more concerned to secure our own salvation, than to dispute about theirs: and yet I must say, that, amongst all the lives of celebrated Heathens, I could never meet with the character of a truly good man. And though I love not to decry morality, yet that pride and self-conceit which mingled itself with their fairest actions, makes me look upon them as indeed *splendida peccata*, a more specious kind of sins. But suppose something could be said for Socrates and Plato, and two or three others, what is that to those huge multitudes, who without all peradventure, ran headlong into everlasting destruction? But let us leave those times, and look upon the present condition of the world. It is a sad account of it that is given by Breerwood in his Enquiries, that dividing the whole world into thirty parts, nineteen are Pagan, six are Mahometan, and only five remain for Christians of all persuasions. I shall not warrant the exactness of his reckoning: but certainly the number of Christians carries but a very small proportion to the rest of mankind. And of these again, how few are there orthodox in their religion? I dare not condemn all those who live in the Romish communion: but sure they lie under very great disadvantages; and, besides the common difficulties of Christianity, their errors and superstitions are no small hinderances unto them.

But we may perhaps think ourselves little concerned in them. Let us consider those who live in communion with ourselves, and see what is to be thought of the generality of them. And, first, we shall find a very great number of them so grossly ignorant, that they know not the way that leads to life. And truly it is not so broad that people should keep it by guess. And however they imagine, that their ignorance will not only be excusable in itself, but afford a cloak to their

other wickedness; yet dreadful is that threatening of the prophet Isaiah, It is a people of no understanding: therefore he that made them will not have mercy upon them, and he that formed them will show them no favour. But, besides those many thousands that perish for lack of knowledge, how great are the number of vicious and scandalous persons? Remove but our gluttons and drunkards, our thieves and deceivers, our oppressors and extortioners, our scolders and revilers, our fornicators and adulterers, and all that cursed crew that are guilty of such heinous crimes, and how thin should our churches be? to what a small number should we quickly be reduced? A little corner would hold us all. And think you these I have been speaking of, are fit to enter into the kingdom of heaven? Perhaps you may think us rash to condemn so many of our neighbours, but the Apostle hath done it to our hands: Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. You see what a heavy sentence is pronounced: and O how many are included under it! I shall name one other vice, which I fear will drive in no small number of those who are yet behind; and that is, the hellish and unaccountable sin of swearing, whereby men do commonly throw away their souls, without any temptation, pleasure, or advantage. How often do men baffle the sacred name of God, by calling him to witness to such trifles as they might be ashamed to attest before any grave or sober person? This they account an ornament of speech, and their words would never sound big enough without it. I cannot stand to reckon up all the aggravations of this sin. It is certainly inconsistent with a religious temper: and this alone, if there were no more, would damn the greatest part of the christian world. And what shall we say of all those other vices, which are so frequently practised, yea, and defended too among us? for, alas! we are arrived at that height

of impiety, that virtue and vice seem to have shifted places; evil and good to have changed their names. It is counted a gallant thing to despise all divine and human laws; and a childish scrupulosity, to forbear any thing that may gratify our lusts. A strong faith is accounted an argument of weak judgment; dependence upon providence is judged want of foresight; and that there is no wit but in deceiving others: no man is reckoned generous, unless he be extremely ambitious; and it is want of courage to forgive an injury. O Religion, whither art thou fled! In what corner of the world shall we find thee? Shall we search thee in courts and palaces of great men? Pride and luxury hath driven thee thence; and they are too much concerned in the business and pleasure of this world, to mind those of another. Shall we seek thee in the cottages of the poor? Envy and discontent lodgeth there; their outward want takes up all their thoughts, and they have little regard for their souls. Shall we go into the city? Cheating and extortion, and intemperance, are almost all we can meet with there. And if we retire into the country, we shall find as little innocence in it. We may look for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry.

After all that we have hitherto said, some may think themselves safe enough, being conscious of none of those vices which we have named. But, alas! what is all this? They may still be far from the kingdom of heaven. Religion stands not in negatives; and the being free from gross and scandalous vices, is a poor plea for heaven. Look how the soul is furnished with those divine graces, which ought to qualify thee for it. I shall name but one; and it is, the love of God; and every body pretendeth to it: but O how few are there in the world that understand what it means; that feel the power and efficacy of it on their own spirits! *Amor est pondus animi;* Love is that weight whereby a soul is carried towards the object which it loves, and resteth in it as its proper centre. Those who are acquainted with this noble passion even in its wanderings

and deviations from its proper object, when it is wholly fixed on some silly creature like ourselves: these, I say, do know what mighty effects it is wont to produce on the souls where it prevaileth; how it makes them almost forget their own interest, and only mind that of another; how careful they are of every thing that may please or advantage the person, and afraid to offend them; what delight they have in their conversation, and how hardly they endure to be absent from them. See therefore if thou findest any thing answerable to these effects of love, in the affection thou pretendest unto God. Are his glory and honour the dearest of all things unto thee; and wouldst thou rather hear thyself and all thy friends reviled, than his holy name blasphemed? Is it thy greatest care and business to please him, and art thou watchful against every sin? Is there nothing in the world so dear unto thee, but thou wouldst part with for his sake; and still desirest he should do his own will rather than thine? Is nothing so delightful as to converse with him? And doth every thing seem burdensome which detains thee long from him? If we would examine ourselves by these measures, I fear most of us would find our confidence built on a sandy foundation.

Perhaps you will tell me, that though things be not so well at present; though you have not yet attained these endowments that are necessary to fit you for heaven, nor have indeed begun to endeavour after them: yet hereafter you hope all shall be well; you will repent and amend once before you die. But consider, I beseech you, my brethren, what it is that you say. When think you that this promised reformation shall begin? Some two or three years after this, when you have pleased yourselves, and indulged your lusts a little more? But what assurance have you to live so long? Are not your neighbours dropping down every day about you, who expected death as little as you? And suppose you live, what greater probability is there of your reformation at that time than now? Had you not the same thoughts and resolutions several years ago, which yet have taken no effect at all? Will you not have the same

temptations and snares? Will your lusts be more easily overcome, when strengthened by longer custom? Will it be more easy to return after you have wandered further out of your way? Belike it is on a deathbed repentance you have grounded your hopes; you resolve to part with your lusts when you can keep them no longer, and serve God Almighty with the dregs of your time. I shall not stand to tell you what shrewd objections are proposed by some great and learned men against the validity and acceptableness of such a repentance: some of them perhaps have been too peremptory and severe. True and unfeigned repentance, which includeth the sincere love of God, and resignation to him, will never come too late: the foundation of heaven is laid in the souls of those that have it. But if we consider what a great matter true repentance is, the shortness of the time, and hinderances of a distempered body, and the ordinary relapses of men who have promised fair on such occasions, and have outlived that sickness they thought had been mortal; we cannot but acknowledge, that a deathbed repentance is seldom sincere; and that it is an unfit time to begin to fight with principalities and powers, when perhaps we have not strength to turn ourselves on our beds; in a word, that of those who do thus delay and put off the business, very few shall be saved.

When we have said all that we can say, there are many will never be persuaded of the truth of that which we have been proving. They cannot think it consistent with the goodness and mercy of God, that the greatest part of mankind should be damned: they cannot imagine that heaven should be such an empty and desolate place, and have so very few to inhabit it. But O what folly and madness is this, for sinful men to set rules unto the divine goodness, and draw conclusions from it so expressly contrary to what himself hath revealed! Is it not enough that he has taught us the way to be happy, and given his own Son to the death to make it possible; that he hath waited so long, and invited us so earnestly, and so frequently told us our

hazard? If all this cannot prevail; if we be obstinately resolved to continue wicked and miserable; if we despise his goodness, and turn all his grace unto wantonness; if we slight his threatenings, and will have none of his reproof; if we court damnation, and throw ourselves headlong into hell: how can we expect that he should interpose his omnipotency to pull us from thence, and place us in heaven against our will? Those blessed regions are not like our new plantations, which are sometimes peopled with the worst sort of persons, lest they should be altogether desolate. There are thousands of angels, and ten thousand times ten thousand that stand about the throne. We know little the extent of the universe, or what proportion the wicked or miserable part of rational beings doth carry to those that are happy and good: but this we know, that God was infinitely happy before he had made any creature; that he needeth not the society of the holy angels, and will never admit that of wicked and irreligious men. But, that I may haste towads a close,

The doctrine we have been insisting on, is sad and lamentable; but the consideration of it may be very useful. It must needs touch any serious person with a great deal of grief and trouble, to behold a multitude of people convened together, and to think, that, before thirty or forty years, a little more, or great deal less, they shall all go down unto the dark and silent grave, and the greater, the far greater part of their souls shall be damned unto endless and unspeakable torments. But this may stir us up unto the greatest diligence and care, that we may do what we can towards the prevention of it. Were the sense of this deeply engraven on all our minds, with what care and diligence, with what seriousness and zeal would ministers deal with the people committed to their charge, that by any means they might save some? How would parents, and husbands, and wives, employ all their diligence and industry, and make use of the most useful methods, for reclaiming their near relations, and pulling them from the brink of hell? Lastly, what holy violence would each of us

use for saving ourselves from this common ruin, and making our calling and election sure? This, I say, is the use of what we have been speaking: and may Almighty God so accompany it with his blessing and power, that it may be so happily effectual to so excellent a purpose. And unto this God, &c.

THE DUTY AND PLEASURE OF PRAISE AND THANKSGIVING.

PSALM CVII. 15.

Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness and for his wonderful works to the children of men!

THERE is scarce any duty of religion more commonly neglected, or more slightly performed, than that of praise and thanksgiving. The sense of our wants puts us upon begging favours from God; and the consciousness of our sins constrains us to deprecate his wrath. Thus interest and self-love send us to our prayers. But, alas! how small a part hath an ingenuous gratitude in our devotion? How seldom are we serious and hearty in our acknowledgement of the divine bounty? The slender returns of this nature which we make, are many times a formal ceremony, a preface to usher in our petitions for what we want, rather than any sincere expression of our thankful resentment for what we have received. Far different was the temper of the holy Psalmist, whose affectionate acknowledgements of the goodness and bounty of God, in the cheerful celebration of his praise, make up a considerable part of his divine and ravishing songs. How often do we find him exciting and disposing himself to join voice, hand and heart together in this holy and delightful employment? Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name.

My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed. I will sing and give praise. Awake up, my glory, awake, psaltery and harp: I myself will awake right early. And being conscious of his own insufficiency for the work, he inviteth others unto it; calling in the whole creation to assist him: O sing unto the Lord a new song; sing unto the Lord all the earth. Give unto the Lord, O ye kindreds of the people, give unto the Lord glory and strength. Praise ye the Lord. Praise ye the Lord from the heavens: praise him in the heights. Praise him, ye sun and moon: praise him, all ye stars of light; mountains and all hills, fruitful trees and all cedars; beasts and all cattle, creeping things, and flying fowl. Bless the Lord, all his works in all places of his dominion. Many such figurative expressions occur, and allowance must be made for the poetical strain; but in the text we have a proper and passionate wish, Oh that men would praise the Lord, &c.

O that men, &c. Man is the great priest of this lower world, by whom all the homage and service of the other creatures is to be paid to their common lord and maker. God hath made him to have dominion over the works of his hand, he hath put all things under his feet; all sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field: the fowl of the air, the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas. And the divine bounty, in maintaining of these poor creatures, redoundeth unto him; and therefore it is highly reasonable that he should pay the tribute of praise for them, who are not capable to know their dependence on God, or their obligations unto him. The young lions are said to roar and seek their meat from God. The young ravens do cry unto him. But these are only the complaints of languishing nature heard and relieved by the God of nature; but not directly and particularly addressed to him. Man alone is capable to entertain communion with God, to know his goodness, and to celebrate his praise.

O that men would praise the Lord. Praise is the acknowledgement of the goodness and excellency of a person: and though the desire of it, in us who have no-

thing of our own but folly and sin, and whose best performances have a miserable alloy of adherent corruption, be a blamable vanity and presumption: yet certainly it is highly reasonable for God, who is the author and fountain of all good, to require and expect it from his creatures. He hath made this great world as a temple for his honour, and it should continually resound with his praise. It is true, all the praises of men and angels can add nothing to his happiness and glory; yet there is a fitness and congruity in the thing; and it is our happiness as well as our duty to perform it: for it is good to sing praises to our God; for it is pleasant, and praise is comely. This is the blessed employment of the holy ones above: and if ever we taste the pleasures of heaven upon earth, it is then when our souls are ravished with an overflowing sense of the divine goodness, and our mouths are filled with his praise.

Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness. All the attributes of God deserve our highest praise. Power, wisdom, and goodness are all one in him; but, as we have different conceptions of these, goodness is that lovely attribute which doth peculiarly attract our affection, and excite our praise. Our love to God doth not so much flow from the consideration of his greatness, whereby he can do whatever he will, as from the consideration of his goodness, that he always willeth what is best, that his almighty power hath infinite wisdom to regulate it and unspeakable bounty to actuate and exert it.

Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men! The divine goodness doth spread and extend itself over all the parts of the universe, and embraceth the whole creation in its arms: it not only displayeth itself most illustriously to the blessed inhabitants above, but also reacheth to the meanest worm that crawleth on the ground. The beasts of the field, and the fowls of the air, and the fishes of the sea, and the innumerable swarms of little insects which we can hardly discern with our eyes, are all subjects of that almighty care: by

him they are brought forth into the world; by him they are furnished with provision suitable for them: These all wait upon thee (saith the Psalmist): that thou mayst give them their meat in due season. That thou givest them, they gather: thou openest thine hand, they are filled with good. But here, to excite us to thankfulness, he makes choice of an instance wherein we ourselves are more nearly concerned; and exhorteth to praise the Lord for his wonderful works to the children of men. If the goodness of God to the holy angels be above our reach, and his bounty to the inferior creatures be below our notice; yet sure we must be infinitely dull if we do not observe his dealings with ourselves and those of our kind. As our interest maketh us more sensible of this, so gratitude doth oblige us to a more particular acknowledgement of it.

Thus you have the meaning and importance of the text. I know not how we can better employ the rest of the time, than by suggesting to your meditations particular instances of this goodness, and of his wonderful works to the children of men.

Let us then reflect on the works both of creation and providence. Let us consider in what a goodly and well-furnished world he hath placed us, how he hath stretched out the heavens as a curtain over our heads, and therein hath set a tabernacle for the sun; which, as an universal lamp, enlighteneth all the inhabitants of the earth. His going forth is from the end of the heaven, his circuit to the ends thereof; and there is nothing hid from his heat. In the morning he ariseth and maketh the darkness flee before him, and discovereth all the beauty and lustre of things. And truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun. Nor is it less useful and advantageous for directing our ways, and ordering our several employments: Man goeth forth to his work, and to his labour until the evening. He maketh darkness, and it is night. The curtains are drawn and all things hushed into silence, that man may enjoy the more quiet repose: and yet, to lessen the horror of darkness, and lighten such as are obliged to travel

in the night, while the sun is enlightening another part of the world, we have the moon and stars to supply his room. O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever. To him that by wisdom made the heavens; for his; &c. The moon and stars to rule by night; for his, &c.

Again, how wonderfully hath he furnished this lower world for our maintenance and accommodation! The heaven, even the heaven of heavens are the Lord's: but the earth hath he given to the children of men. He hath made us to have dominion over all the works of his hands; he hath put all things under our feet: all sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field: the fowl of the air, the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas. By the art and industry of man the swiftest fowls are caught; the fiercest creatures are tamed; the strongest beasts are overcome, and all made serviceable unto him. The horse helpeth our journey both with speed and ease, the oxen labour the ground for us; sheep afford us meat and clothes: from the bowels of the earth we dig fuels, metals, and stones; which are still the more plentiful, as they are useful and advantageous to us. Those stones which serve for building, are almost everywhere ready at hand; whereas rubies and diamonds, and other such glistering trifles, are found but in a few places of the world, and gotten with a great deal of toil. And to what hardship should all sort of artificers be put, if iron were as scanty as gold? The surface of the earth yieldeth grass for the cattle, and herb for the service of man; and wine that maketh glad the heart of man, and bread which strengtheneth his heart. These it affordeth unto us from time to time; and, while we are spending the productions of one year, God is providing for us against another. There is no small variety of seasons and influences, which concur for the production of that corn, which we murmur so much for when we want, and value so little when it doth abound. The winter-cold must temper and prepare the earth: the gentle spring must cherish and foment the seed; vapours must be raised, and condensed into clouds, and then

squeezed out and sifted into little drops, to water and refresh the ground; and then the summer heat must ripen and digest the corn before it be fit to be cut down. Thou visitest the earth (saith the Psalmist,) and waterest it: thou greatly enrichest it with the river of God which is full of water: thou preparest them corn, when thou hast so provided for it. Thou waterest the ridges thereof abundantly: thou settlest the furrows thereof: thou makest it soft with showers; thou blessest the springing thereof. Thou crownest the year with thy goodness, and all thy paths drop fatness. They drop upon the pastures of the wilderness: and the little hills rejoice on every side. The pastures are clothed with flocks; the valleys also are covered over with corn; they shout for joy, they also sing.

O Lord how wonderful are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches. So is the great and wide sea, wherein are things creeping innumerable, both small and great fishes. There go the ships, those great engines of traffic and commerce, whereby every country is easily furnished with the productions of another. And indeed it is a wonderful and astonishing contrivance of nature, that men should be easily transported to the remotest places in such floating houses, and carried (so to speak) upon the wings of the wind; that they should be able to find out their way in the widest ocean and darkest night, by the direction of a trembling needle, and the unaccountable influence of a sorry stone. They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters: these see the works of the Lord, and his wonders in the deep. For he commandeth, and raiseth the stormy wind, which lifteth up the waves thereof. They mount up to the heaven, they go down again to the depths, their soul is melted because of trouble. They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wits end. Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and he bringeth them out of their distresses. He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still. Then are they glad, because they are quiet; so he bringeth them unto their desired haven. Oh that men, &c.

But now we are fallen unawares from the works of creation to those of providence. Indeed it is hard to keep to any exact method in a subject so copious, where one thing doth obtrude itself upon us before we have done with another. Let us call back our thoughts to a more orderly consideration of that bountiful providence which followeth us from time to time. We are infinitely indebted to the divine goodness before we see the light of the world. He poureth us out as milk, and crudleth us like cheese. He clothes us with skin and flesh, and fenceth us with bones and sinews. He granteth us life and favour, and his visitation preserveth our spirit. This is so entirely the work of God, that the parents do not so much as understand how it is performed; for who knoweth the way of the spirit, (how it cometh to enlighten a piece of matter,) or how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child? I will praise thee, (saith the Psalmist,) for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works, and that my soul knoweth right well. My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance yet being unperfect, and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there were none of them. How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them! &c. Nine months ordinarily pass in the forming of this curious and wonderful piece, before it be exposed to the view of the world; and then the prisoner is released from that narrow confinement, and the mother and the child are delivered together. The mother forgetteth her anguish and pangs, for joy that a man child is born into the world. The poor infant is naked and weak, ready to expire for hunger and cold, unable to do any thing for itself but weep and cry: but he that brought it into the world, hath already provided for its sustentation in it. The mother's breasts are filled with a wholesome and delicious liquor, which faileth not from time to time, but is invisibly

supplied, like the widow of Sarepta's oil, till the child become capable of stronger food.

But it was not enough that mothers should be enabled to sustain their infants, unless they had been also powerfully inclined unto it; and, therefore, God hath implanted those bowels of kindness and compassion, which prompts them to the most tender and affectionate care, and makes them as ready to help their children's necessities as their own: which, though it do hardly deserve the name of a virtue, being common to them with the brutes, for even the seamonsters draw out the breasts, and give suck to their young; yet certainly it is an effect of the divine wisdom, that infants may not want those succours which would never have been so effectually secured to them by a law. Meanwhile, the poor infant is so weak, and so unable to endure the least violence, and withal exposed to so innumerable dangers, that the mother's solicitude and care would be to little purpose, if it were not preserved by a higher and invisible power, which watcheth for its safety when the mother and nurse are fast asleep, and keeps it from being overlaid.

As we grow in years, our necessities multiply, and dangers increase rather than diminish; and we are still more and more obliged to God for the supply of the one, and our preservation from the other. We think perhaps we have now set up for ourselves, and can provide what is necessary by our own industry, and keep ourselves out of harm's way. But there cannot be a more foolish and unreasonable thought. There needeth but a little consideration to undeceive us. All that we project and do for ourselves, dependeth on the integrity of our faculties, and the soundness of our reason; which is a happiness we can never secure unto ourselves. I choose this instance the rather, because it is a mercy invaluable in itself, and I fear very seldom considered by us. O what an unspeakable blessing it is, that we are preserved in our right wits; that we are not roaring in some bedlam, or running furiously up and down the

streets; nor have our spirits sunk into silliness or stupidity, which would make every little child to mock and deride us! It is possible enough that this should befall the wisest and most steadfast of us all. A stroke on the head, a few more degrees of heat in the blood, or agitation of the vital spirits, were enough to do the business. So weak and mutable creatures are we; so small is the distance between a wise man and a fool. Next to the use of our reason, how much are we indebted to the divine goodness for our health and welfare! These bodies of ours are made up of so various parts, and withal so nice and delicate, that the least thing in the world is enough to entangle and disorder them. A drop of humour, or a grain of sand, will sometimes occasion such anguish and pain, as render a man insensible of all the comforts he enjoyeth in the world: and they who understand any thing of the human body, will justly wonder that all the parts are kept in order for an hour. What a mercy ought we therefore to account it, to find ourselves in health and vigour; no aching in our head, no noisomeness in our stomach, no fever in the blood, none of the humours vitiated, none of those innumerable conduits broken which convey them, but all the organs performing their proper functions, and a sprightly vigour possessing every part! How much are we indebted to that providence which preserveth us from falls and bruises, and keepeth all our bones, so that none of them is broken; which watcheth over us when we are not able to care for ourselves! What a blessing is it to enjoy the repose of the night; that we are not wearied with endless tossings and rollings, nor scared with dreams, and terrified with visions, whereof holy Job complains; that we are protected from fire and violence, from evil spirits, and from evil men! I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep; for thou, Lord, only makest me to dwell in safety. And what shall we say of our food and raiment, of our houses and manifold accommodations, of the kindness of our neighbours, and the love of our friends, of all the means of our subsistence, and all the comforts of our lives? We are made up, as it were, of

a great many several pieces, have such a variety of interests and enjoyments concurring to our present happiness, that it is an unspeakable goodness which continueth them all with us from time to time: that when we awake in the morning we should find our minds clear, our bodies well, our house safe, all our friends in health, and all our interests secure. He is a wall of fire about us, and about all that we have, by night and by day; and his mercies are new every morning. I cannot stand to speak of all those more public mercies, the peace and tranquillity of kingdoms, and all the happy effects of society and government. I shall only say, that it is a signal instance of the divine wisdom and goodness in the government of the world, that such a vast number of persons only actuated by self-love, should all conspire for the public interest, and so eminently advance one another's welfare; that magistrates should so willingly undergo the trouble of government, and a heady and inconsiderate multitude should be commanded and overawed by a single man. Certainly it can be no other but that same God who stilleth the noise of the waves, that can prevent or compose the tumults of the people.

Hitherto we have considered those instances of the divine bounty which relate to our temporal concerns. But sure we were made for some higher and more excellent end, than to pass a few months or years in this world, to eat, drink, sleep, and die. God hath designed us for a more lasting and durable life, and hath accordingly made greater provisions for it. He taketh care of our very bodies; but hath an infinitely greater regard to those spiritual and immortal substances which he hath breathed into us. And here in all reason we ought to begin with that great and fundamental mercy, which is the root and spring of all his other mercies towards the souls of men; I mean the incarnation and the death of his only begotten Son. But, alas! where are those affections wherewith that should be spoken and heard? Our dulness makes me almost afraid to meddle with so high a theme. That the eternal Son of God, the Wisdom of the Father, the maker and lord of all things,

should clothe himself with the infirmities of the human nature, and come down from the habitation of his glory, and take up his abode among the wretched and rebellious children of men, to reclaim them from their wickedness and folly, and reduce them to their duty and their happiness; that he should have gone up and down in the world upwards of thirty years in poverty, affliction, and contempt, doing good and suffering evil, scattering blessings and enduring injuries wherever he came; and at last should have yielded up his life in unspeakable anguish and torment, to be a propitiation for our sins; these are matters which ought never to be spoken or heard, without losing ourselves (as it were) in a rapture of admiration, gratitude, and love. O the breadth, length, depth, and height of that love which passeth all knowledge; which made God assume our nature, that we might become partakers of his! It is true, all that our Saviour hath done and suffered, proveth ineffectual to the greatest part of mankind. But sure they have themselves to blame. God hath both said and sworn, that he hath no pleasure in the death of sinners, but would have them rather repent and live. And indeed this way of dealing with them, doth sufficiently declare the same. With what long-suffering patience doth he wait for their repentance! what pains doth he take to reclaim them!

It is an astonishing thing to consider what indignities and affronts are every day done unto that infinite Majesty by sinful dust and ashes, and that he doth not avenge himself by their total overthrow; that they should violate his law, and despise his threatenings, and defy him, as it were, unto his very face, and yet he should pity and spare them, and wait to be gracious unto them. Were the government of the world committed to the meekest person on the face of the earth, he would never endure the outrages which are committed against heaven, but would presently lose all his patience, and turn the whole frame into ruin. But God is love. His thoughts and ways are not like those of men; but as the heavens are higher than the earth, so

are his thoughts and ways higher than ours. And when the obstinate wickedness of sinful creatures doth, as it were, force and extort punishment from his hands, what reluctancy, what unwillingness doth he express to this work; this strange and unnatural work, as himself seems to term it? How shall I give thee up, O Ephraim? How shall I give thee up? O that my people had hearkened unto me, that Israel had known my ways! O Jerusalem! O Jerusalem! &c.

Again, as God waiteth patiently for our reformation, so he doth make use of many methods and means to bring us unto it. He hath published the gospel through the world, and brought down the knowledge of it to our days, in spite of all the opposition of devils and men. He hath established a church, and appointed a whole order of men, whose peculiar calling and business in the world is, to take care of peoples' souls, to instruct them in the way to heaven, and as ambassadors in Christ's stead, to beseech them to be reconciled unto God. These are some of his common mercies: but who can express that favour and love which he showeth to his own, to those blessed persons whom he chooseth, and causeth to approach unto himself, when he rescueth them from the vanity of their conversation, and that pollution which is in the world through lust; when he mouldeth their souls unto a conformity with himself, and stampeth his blessed image upon them; when he visiteth them with his Holy Spirit, and filleth their heart with those hidden pleasures which none can understand but those that feel them! A stranger intermeddleth not with their joy. And yet even these are but the earnest of that great felicity for which he hath designed us; those joys that are at his right hand, those pleasures that endure for evermore. Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor can it enter into the heart of man to conceive what God hath prepared for those that love him. And it doth not yet appear what we shall be. Meanwhile, those small and imperfect discoveries which are made to us in the holy Scriptures of that inconceivable happiness, are enough to overwhelm us with admiration and wonder. To think

that the blessed day is coming, when we shall be loosed from these dull and lumpish bodies; those sinks of corruption, diseases, and pains; those prisons and dungeons of our heaven-born souls; and, being clothed with robes of light and glory, shall get above the clouds, and all those storms and tempests which are here below; and be carried into those blessed regions of calmness and serenity, of peace and joy, of happiness and security; when we shall come unto the innumerable company of angels, and the general assembly of the church of the first-born, and the spirits of just men made perfect; and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant; there to behold the glory of God, and all the splendour of the court of heaven; to view and contemplate that infinite power which created the world, that unsearchable wisdom which ordereth all things, that unspeakable goodness which exerteth both; nay, so to see God as to become like unto him; and beholding with open face the glory of the Lord, to be changed into the same image, from glory to glory: to receive the continual illapses of the divine goodness, and the constant expressions of his favour and love; and to have our own souls melted and dissolved into the flames of reciprocal affection, and that fire fed and nourished by uninterrupted enjoyments: in a word, to be continually transported into ecstasies and raptures, and swallowed up in the embraces of eternal sweetness, and to be lost, as it were, in the source and fountain of happiness and bliss! Lord, what is man, that thou takest knowledge of him? or the son of man, that thou makest such account of him? and that thou shouldst set thine heart so much upon him? Oh that men would therefore praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men! O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever. Blessed be the name of the Lord from this time forth and for evermore. Amen.

ON THE NATIVITY OF OUR SAVIOUR.

O

PSALM II. 11. the latter part.

Rejoice with trembling.

THE observation of festivals being one of those balls of contention which have been tossed so hotly in the religious debates of this unhappy age, it may perhaps be expected, that we should begin with a vindication of this day's solemnity from the exceptions that are wont to be taken against it; and that the one half of our sermon should be spent in apology for the other. But I hope we may well enough spare the pains, and employ the time to better purpose. For you who are assembled in this house are persuaded, I trust, of the lawfulness of your own practice; and we cannot direct our speech to those that are absent from it. And really it were to be wished, that there were less noise and debate about matters of this nature; and that, being agreed in the more substantial parts of religion, we did all charitably acquiesce in that excellent advice of the Apostle, which he giveth in a parallel instance, Let not him that eateth, despise him that eateth not; and let not him that eateth not, judge him that eateth. And then, as we shall not abate any thing of that love and reverence which we owe to the piety and truth of those who differ from us in so small matters, so we might hope they would not be hasty to condemn us, if in compliance with the practice of the ancient church, and the present constitution of our own, we take the occasion of this season, with thankfulness, to remember the greatest benefit that ever was conferred on the children of men, and at this time perform that service which can never be unseasonable. However, I am confident it is both more hard and necessary to rectify and amend the

abuses of this solemnity, than to justify the right observation of it; to vindicate it from the dishonour of some of its pretended friends, than to defend it from all the assaults of aggressors: and accordingly we shall make it our work to persuade you to such a deportment on this festival, as may best suit with the holy life and religion of that person whose nativity we commemorate.

The text which we have chosen may seem somewhat general, but yet it is easily applicable to the present occasion; especially if we remember, that it is an inference drawn from a prophecy, which, though it had its literal completion in the establishment of David's throne, yet it was, in a mystical and a more sublime sense, fulfilled in the incarnation and kingdom of the Messiah; as the Apostle in several places informeth us: For to which of the angels hath he said at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? Whence he infers, that the angels themselves are inferior to Christ, of whom this was spoken. The only difficulty of the words lieth in the strange conjunction of these passions, *joy*, and *extreme fear*, which *trembling* seems to import; but this will be more fully cleared in the sequel of our discourse. Meanwhile ye may observe, that both these words, *fear* and *trembling*, are used in the text, and, in the scripture-phrase, usually import humility, and diligence, solicitude and caution, and the fear of displeasing, as being the most proper qualifications of our obedience, either to God or man. Thus are we commanded to work out our salvation with fear and trembling; and servants are commanded to obey their masters with fear and trembling: so the Corinthians are said to have received Titus, being sent to them, with fear and trembling; and Chrysostom saith of the angels, that they assist with fear and trembling. All which places do import such care and diligence, as are very necessary and reconcilable to cheerful service. Reverence, and fear to offend, will be happily joined with holy joy in the performance of our duty; there being nothing more pleasant, than to serve him diligently whom we reverence, and fear to displease. Thus

much for explication. The text is too short to be divided into many parts, but doth naturally fall asunder into two; the former exciting and encouraging our joy; the latter qualifying and moderating the same. First, we are allowed, yea, and commanded to rejoice; and then we are cautioned to do it with trembling. And accordingly our discourse shall run in these two heads; first, to exhort you to cheerfulness and joy; then to set the right bounds and limits to the same: and, having done this in general, we shall endeavour to draw both these home to the present occasion.

To begin with the first: Joy and cheerfulness are so far from being inconsistent with religion, when rightly ordered, that we find them many times allowed and recommended in Scripture. Thus in the last verse of the 32d Psalm, Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, ye righteous: and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart. And in verse 1. of the next Psalm, Rejoice in the Lord, O ye righteous, for praise is comely for the upright. So Psal. lxviii. 3. Let the righteous be glad: let them rejoice before the Lord, yea, let them exceedingly rejoice. Psal. cxlix. 5. Let the saints be joyful in glory: let them sing aloud upon their beds. And, that you may not think this a liberty proper only for the former dispensations, but that Christians are obliged to greater severity, the Apostle doth no less than three times give this admonition to the Philippians, Rejoice in the Lord; Rejoice always in the Lord; yea, I say, Rejoice. In relation to this perhaps it was, that the old hermit Palladius, having five hundred scholars, used never to dismiss them without this admonition, My friends, be cheerful; forget not, I beseech you, to be cheerful. This was the constant lecture he repeated, as often as St. John was wont to do these words, My little children, love one another.

None of our natural inclinations were made in vain; and joy is neither a useless nor a small passion; but, if rightly ordered, may become an eminent exercise of religion, as proper a concomitant of thankfulness, as sorrow of repentance. Our devotion never soareth higher,

than when it is carried on the wings of joy and love, when our souls are filled with the sense of his goodness, and we heartily applaud the Hallelujahs of the blessed spirits, and all the praises of the creatures. And as joy is an excellent instrument of devotion, so a constant serenity and cheerfulness of spirit is a fit disposition for our other duties. I should be loth to countenance any levity or dissolution of spirit; and I hope, before we have done, we shall leave no ground to suspect such a design: and yet I would not have you imagine that innocence and severity are inseparable companions, or that a free and cheerful countenance is a certain sign of an ill mind, or that men ought always to be sad, under the notion of being serious. I would not have you in love with a studied face, nor think it a crime to laugh, or scrupulously to refuse such innocent and ingenious divertisements as you find useful to refresh your spirits, and preserve their alacrity: for cheerfulness enlightens the mind, and encourages the heart, and raiseth the soul, as it were to breathe in a purer air. It misbecomes none but the wicked, in whom it is commonly a light mirth and foolish jollity. As a curious dress may set off a handsome face, which yet will render those who are ugly, more ill-favoured; so doth cheerfulness exceedingly become good souls; in bad men it is most ridiculous. On the other hand, a sad and sullen humour, a dumpish, morose, and melancholy disposition, is so far from being commendable, that at best it must be looked upon as an infirmity and weakness in the best of those in whom it resideth; and if purposely affected or cherished, may deserve a severe censure; being dishonourable to God, injurious to our neighbours, prejudicial to ourselves, and a thing highly unreasonable. First, it is dishonourable to God, on whom we profess to depend, and who, through our moroseness, may be mistaken for a hard and severe master. If you should observe any man's servants to be always sad and dejected, and could not guess at the reason of it, you would be ready to conclude, that they were ill treated at home, and served an unkind, tyrannical person. And therefore, if we have any regard to the honour of

our master, we ought carefully to avoid any thing, from which those that are strangers to him, are apt to take occasion to entertain harsh and disadvantageous thoughts of him and his service. Again, it is injurious to our neighbours; whom it doth deprive of the comforts of society, and the innocent delights of more cheerful converse; it being better to be confined to solitude than obliged to live with those who are always sullen. They are not like to be good company to others, who are so bad company to themselves; nor will they easily endure to see others cheerful and pleasant, when they cannot allow themselves so much as to smile. Peevishness and anger are the ordinary companions of melancholy; and it is hard for servants and friends to please them in any thing who are accustomed to sadness and discontent. But this is not all: there is a greater mischief in the matter; for they who are strangers to reilgion, and observe them who pretend to it to be always sad and melancholy, are thereby deterred from the study of piety, as that which would imbitter their lives, and deprive them of all their comforts; and they are apt to imagine, that if once they should undertake a course of godliness, they should never after enjoy a pleasant hour, but, by a melancholy humour, and austere behaviour, become a burden to themselves, and a burden to all about them. Then they will think devotion a comfortless employment, when they see men come from retirements with sad and heavy looks, morose and untowardly deportment: whereas really the spirit of religion is in itself most amiable and most lovely, most cheerful, free and ingenuous; and it is only men's weakness, and not their piety, that ought to be blamed for any such disorder in their minds.

Again, melancholy and sadness is prejudicial to ourselves, being an enemy to nature, and hurtful to bodily constitutions, especially when it grows prevalent and extreme; and therefore men are obliged to be cheerful for the same reasons they take physic, and to guard against melancholy as we would do against a disease. Besides, it is very troublesome to our spirits, and will make us smart even when we know not why. Al-

though melancholy musings may be a very delightful entertainment to the mind; yet, in a little time, they grow to be very troublesome. Contrary to the nature of other births, they please us much while we bring them forth, but, prove a miserable torment when they are born. But, which is much worse, it doth exceedingly indispose for the duties of religion. The eyes are not more darkened with fumes and vapours, than the understanding is when those sullen exhalations gather about us. Clogs are not a greater impediment to the feet, than this humour to the motions of the soul. It inclines not only to think worse of ourselves and our condition than we need, but to do worse than otherwise we should. It represents those things as exceedingly difficult which may be done with ease, and those impossible which have any considerable difficulty. It quite dispirits us, and will not suffer us to attempt any thing, because we imagine we can do nothing. Although, perhaps, in a heat it may push us forward, yet it suddenly stays us, and makes us think we cannot go. If it catcheth fire, it makes us wild; and, when it hath spent that flame, it leaves us dead and dumpish.

Lastly, sadness and dejection of spirit in Christians, is a thing very unreasonable: for why should they be sad and heavy who serve so good a master, and who are assured of an infinite reward for their faithful service? If the favour of a prince, or hopes of some earthly advantage, can support and cheer the minds of men; why should not religious people, who have the friendship of God, and so many divine blessings in present possession, and the certain expectation of more and greater, cherish a perpetual joy, and ever be of good comfort; What should afflict them or cast them down? Is it worldly crosses or fears? They have not their portions in the things of this world: they are strangers and pilgrims on earth, and cannot in reason be much solicitous about their accommodation in an inn, which they are so shortly to leave. Besides, where is he that doth not enjoy more and greater comforts than those he is deprived and stands in need of? Why then shouldst thou not be more

glad of what thou hast, than sorry for what thou wantest? Perhaps thou hast lost part of thy fortune, but yet enjoyest more than many who live happily enough notwithstanding. Thou wantest money, but thou hast thy health. If that be impaired, thou enjoyest the use of thy reason, which is infinitely more valuable. Thou hast lost a friend, but perhaps thou hast many behind; and shall that loss do more to make thee sad, than all the rest to make thee cheerful? Or wilt thou, like a peevish child, throw all away, because something is taken from thee? I say not that moderate sadness is blamable on such occasions, but that our grief ought not to be indulged till it grows habitual. And sure whatever our crosses and our fears be, we ought cheerfully to acquiesce in a constant dependence on the divine providence; having that infinite wisdom, and goodness, and power, which made and doth govern the world, to care for us, and the promise of God for all those things which he sees necessary or convenient for us. What is it then that should deject us, and deprive us of that joy which the text alloweth and commendeth? Is it the sense of our weakness, and the fear of missing that eternal happiness for which we were created? If thou be altogether graceless, such thoughts would seldom trouble thee; but if thou be really concerned in religion, and have a mind to heaven in earnest; if thou hast begun thy race, and art pressing forward to obtain thy prize, thou hast no reason to be discouraged or cast down. God loves thee better than thou dost either him or thyself; and holiness is the genuine issue of the divine nature: and therefore he cannot hide his face from it, he cannot desert it as an outcast thing in the world; nay, he is ready to cherish and assist it, and perfect that gracious work which himself hath begun. Away then with groundless fears and despondent thoughts, which dishonour God, and weaken your own hands. Encourage yourselves with the assurance of the divine assistance, and cheerfully perform that which is incumbent upon yourselves. Check the sadness of your spirits, and chide yourself into better temper; as

David did, in Psal. xlii. and xliii. He took up his drooping mind, with this encouragement, Why art thou cast down, O my soul? &c.

But perhaps you will tell me, that cheerful temper which we recommend, is very improper for these bad times wherein we live: and, though we had no trouble on account of our own interests, the miseries of others might oblige us to sadness, and blunt and damp all our joys. I answer, compassion indeed is a Christian virtue, and a good man will be concerned in the miseries under which he sees his neighbour groan, and be ready to assist him with his counsel, his labour, or his purse, if that will relieve him. But he is not obliged to suffer the calamities of others to sink so deeply into his spirit, as to disturb the peace and harmony of his soul, else, since the world is a great hospital of misery, and we see wellnigh as many miserable persons as men, we must needs draw as much misery on ourselves, as all theirs doth amount to, and so deserve more compassion than any of them. Again, if we partake of the miseries of others, so may we in their happiness; if we ought to mourn with those that mourn, so we ought to rejoice with them that rejoice: And though misery is far more frequent in the world than happiness, this can be no measure for the whole creation; and for any thing we know, for one sinful wretch, there may be ten thousand holy and happy spirits. However, all the misery in the world carries no proportion to the infinite happiness of Almighty God, which ought to be the highest object of our joy, and may drown and swallow up all the excuses or pretences of excessive sadness. We ought to rejoice in God, not only that he is our God, but that he is God infinitely holy, and infinitely happy; that he is self-blessed, glorious in all things; and that his enemies cannot reach nor unsettle his throne. This is the most certain, and constant, the most pure and heavenly joy.

There remaineth yet one occasion of grief, which some may think enough to banish all joy from a Christian soul; and that is, the multitude of sins whereof we and others are guilty. And certainly, contrition, and zeal

for the honour of God, are very necessary duties; yet we were not born only to mourn, nor is the lamenting of sin all we have to do in the world. We love to see a servant sensible of his fault, but would be ill-content if on that account he did nothing but weep. Sadness in contrition is necessary to make our repentance serious, and sadness of zeal to testify our concernment in God's interest; but on neither of these accounts ought we to grieve without term or measure. As we ought to grieve that we have offended so gracious a God, so ought we to rejoice that the God whom we have offended is so gracious: and since the greatness of God's mercy is as far above our sins, as the heavens are above the earth, our faith and joy in God's mercy ought to be far above our sadness for our sins. Whereas the blasphemies and oppositions of God's enemies, by his wisdom and power, shall turn to his glory; our sadness for these oppositions must end in joy, for that almighty power and sovereign glory, which the enmity of Satan, and the world, and the flesh, doth but make more conspicuous by pulling against it.

By this time I hope it doth appear, that joy and cheerfulness are more allowable in Christians, than some men perhaps are ready to imagine. I shall add no more to this purpose; but that it is the privilege of a holy and religious soul, that every thing he meets with may afford him occasion of joy. If he looks up to heaven, it puts him in mind of the mansions that are preparing for him; if on the earth, it rejoiceth him to think of his interest in Him who made and governs the same. If he considers the changes and revolutions of human affairs, it satisfies him to remember, that an unerring providence doth overrule all their seeming disorders, and makes them all serve to great and glorious designs. If he live long, he is glad of the large time he is allowed to do his work in; and, if he die soon, he is glad that he is so soon come to the end and reward of his work. If he be richer than his neighbours, he rejoiceth in the opportunity of obliging them; and, if they be richer than he, he rejoiceth that they have the plenty and splendour

which riches afford, and that he wants the care and temptations that attend them. As many miseries as he seeth, so many arguments he hath to glorify God, and rejoice in his goodness, saying, Blessed be God that I am not maimed like that begging soldier, nor frantic like that bedlamite, nor in prison like that bankrupt, nor like that thief in shackles, nor in perpetual trouble like that counsellor of state.

But joy is a passion so pleasing unto nature, that most men are easily persuaded unto it, those especially who have the least ground for it. And what we have said hitherto, may have the ill luck to be mistaken or wrested by profane persons, for the defence of their jollity and frolicksome mirth. But it should be considered, that our exhortation to cheerfulness and joy presupposeth men to be good and religious, and is addressed to them on that presumption: for we should never encourage men to rejoice and be cheerful, while they are at enmity with their maker, at feud with the infinite Majesty of heaven, whose least frown is enough to confound them. We would not have men to dance on the brink of hell, nor wantonly exult in the way that leads to destruction. Another temper would better become their unhappy condition, and they ought to be thinking how a timely sorrow may lay a sure foundation for a lasting joy. Again, the joy which we commend, is a quite different thing from that levity and dissolution of spirit which some persons would cover under that name. We allow not that light airy temper that is inconsistent with gravity and seriousness. We would not have a man's whole life become a sport, nor mirth to become his whole employment. Of such laughter we may say, with the wise man, that it is mad; and of mirth, What doth it? The cheerfulness we have been speaking of, must spring from the sense of the divine goodness, and the conscience of our sincerity in his service; though we are not to refuse the assistance of innocent acts to raise and recruit our natural spirits when they faint and fail within us. Finally, that our cheerfulness and joy may be allowable, it must be rightly tempered. Which leads

me to the second part of the text; which if it do not check, it doth at least mix and qualify our joy: rejoice we may, but it must be with trembling. Trembling is a natural effect and sign of fear; and is here put for the thing signified. Now, fear may seem to be the most useless and unprofitable passion in the mind: it is that which presages mischief and anticipates our miseries, giving them a being before they had any, and troubling us with the apprehension of those evils which may never befall us, and hindering us to guard against many which we might have prevented: betraying those succours which reason offereth, as the wise son of David tells us. The historian, speaking of the Persians, who in their flight flung away their weapons of defence, addeth this observation. *Adeo timor ipsa auxilia reformidat:* Such is the nature of fear, that it not only makes us flee from danger, but from those helps and succours which should keep it off. But, as Alexander said of his fierce and stately horse, *Qualem isti equum perdunt, dum eo per imperitiam uti nesciunt!* What a brave horse is lost for want of skill to manage him! so we may say of fear, that they who would discharge it, do lose a useful passion, not knowing how to order it. Fear, doubtless, is an excellent instrument, both of reason and of religion. And as all our passions, so especially fear, are as winds, which although they sometimes drive us upon rocks, yet, rightly improved, may swell our sails, and carry us on to the haven where we would be. Hence we may find it so frequently commanded in Scripture, and so profitably practised by wise and holy persons. The question then is, What kind of fear and trembling is enjoined here in the text? And, first, as for the object, certainly the wrath and displeasure of God is the most proper and suitable object of our fear: it is this that we ought to look on as the greatest evil, and to shun with the greatest care. And this fear, if rightly seated in our souls, will make us very watchful against the smallest sins, and make us heartily sorry for the offences of others. But though the fear of God's displeasure be more excellent and useful, yet the

fear of our own misery is not to be condemned: it is useful, not only to wicked persons, whom though it doth not make good, yet it keeps them from being worse; but also to holy persons, whom the fear of hell hath many times helped forward to heaven. Our Saviour himself adviseth us to fear him who can cast body and soul into hell-fire. And, that we may not forget it, he drives it home with an ingemination, Yea, I say unto you, Fear him; where we are to observe, that *qui* imports as much as *quia;* the description of the person carrieth the reason for which we ought to fear him. It were indeed to be wished, that our souls were knit unto God by the more noble and generous passion of love, and that we needed neither rewards to draw us to our duty, nor punishments to chase us to our happiness; and that we loved goodness as Cato was said to do virtue, because he could not do otherwise. But this is, with the historian, *votum accommodare, non historiam;* to present a wish, rather than a character of an ordinary Christian; or, as Xenophon did with Cyrus, to describe rather what he should be, than what he is. Perfect love, as St. John tells us, casteth out all fear: but, while our love is imperfect, it leaves room for some fear. Hell is certainly in our creed as well as heaven; and as the fear of it is ordinarily the first step of conversion, so it may be of use to quicken us, and push us forward all along through our journey toward heaven. But if Christians fear may have hell for its object, what kind of fear may this be? In a word, it ought not to be such an anxious and troublesome fear, as may disturb our tranquillity, or extinguish our joy, or discourage our endeavours; but so rational and modest as may make us reverend in our love, modest in our confidence, and cautious in our joy, that it neither betray us to, nor vent itself in any unseemly expressions.

And thus much of the duty recommended in the text. It is high time now to apply these generals to the present occasion. We are assembled this day to commemorate the greatest blessing that ever was bestowed on the children of men; a blessing wherein all the nations of the

world are concerned, and yet whose fruits do as entirely redound to every good man, as if it had been designed for him alone; a mercy that doth at once astonish and rejoice the angels, who in comparison of us are unconcerned in it. These mountains do leap for joy, because the valleys were filled with a fruitful shower: for when those glorious spirits did behold God stooping to the condition of a man, and man raised above the lowliness of his state, and the happiness of all the angels, they were transported with admiration of the mystery, and joy for the felicity of their fellow-creatures: and did with the greatest cheerfulness perform the embassies they were sent upon in this great affair. For having before advertised the blessed virgin of her miraculous conception, lest her modesty should have been offended at so strange an accident, and having removed the suspicion of her betrothed husband, they rejoice to bring the first news of that infinite mercy which we remember this day. For as certain shepherds were feeding their flocks by night, an angel of the Lord appeared unto them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them; and when this glorious appearance had confounded their senses, and almost scattered their understanding, the angel said unto them, Fear not; for behold, I bring unto you tidings of great joy, which shall be unto all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, the whole choir of glorious spirits, who all joined in this heavenly anthem, Glory to God on high, on earth peace, and good-will towards men. And may not that help to heighten and advance our joy and our thankfulness? Can we be insensible of our happiness when angels do so heartily congratulate it? It is a nativity which we celebrate, and any birth doth much rejoice persons interested: a woman forgets her pangs when a man-child is born into the world.

But, that our joy and thankfulness may be the more excited, we shall, first, consider the excellency of the

person who was born: secondly, the design of his birth; and, thirdly, glance a little at the circumstances of it.

First, then, he was no common and ordinary person whose birth occasions our joy. If we shall but fix our eyes on his human nature, and consider those excellencies that were obvious to the eyes of the world, we shall yet acknowledge, that never such a person appeared on the face of the earth. It is he whose nativity was promised immediately after the fall, and so exactly pointed at by the Prophets many hundred years before it happened, that the Jews could tell the place, and the very heathens had some knowledge of the time: for the world was big with expectation, that the prophecies should then be fulfilled, which foretold the birth of a great person. Lastly, it is he whose very infancy not only startled a king, and made him fear his throne, but also affrighted the powers of darkness, and silenced the heathen oracles, *Ille puer Hebræus*, &c.; whose childhood puzzled the knowledge of the aged, and confounded the doctors of the law; who ruled the course of nature, and made the strong winds obey him, and could walk on the billows of the seas as on a pavement; who fed multitudes by his word, and healed all manner of diseases without medicine; who could command them to leap that were cripple, and make them see the heavens and the day who had been born blind; and who could cast devils out of their possessions, and restore the frantic to their wits; who could break the gates of death, and open the doors of the grave, and call back the spirits to the buried carcasses.

It is he, who, by the ministry of twelve fishermen, made his religion, though contrary to the corrupt affections and carnal interests of men, quickly subdue the known world, and submit to a crucified king. The doctrine which he taught, mastered the understanding of the most learned philosophers, conquered the spirits of the most valiant commanders, and outwitted the cunning of the subtlest politicians: it cancelled the ceremonies of the Jew, confounded the wisdom of the Greek,

and instructed the rudeness of the barbarian; and remains still in the world a constant evidence of the author's wisdom and power. And what shall we speak of the goodness and moral endowments of that human nature, which were as miraculous as his power! Nay, all his miracles were instances of the one as well as of the other. Should we speak of his ardent piety and devotion, his love to God, and his zeal for his honour, his amiable meekness and humility, his universal charity and compassion even toward his bitter enemies, his venerable purity and temperance, the noble contempt of the world, all those other virtues which shined so eminently in his whole conversation: a sermon were too little for every particular. But this is not all: He was not only far above other men, but infinitely above the angels; being personally united to the divine nature. He was God as well as man. And, by communication of properties, it may be said, that he whom we now behold in a cradle, hath his throne in the heaven, and filleth all things by his immensity; that he who was wrapt in swaddling clothes, is now clothed in infinite glory; and he whom we find in a stable among beasts, is the same with him encircled with millions of angels. In a word, that great person whose nativity we celebrate, is divinely embodied, God made flesh. This union of the divine and human nature, is a mystery great enough to confound our understanding, but not to trouble or shake our faith, who know many things to be which we cannot know how they are, and are not able to give any account of the union between the soul and the body, or of the parts of nature among themselves, which yet we never call in question.

And thus much of the dignity of Christ's person, which is the first ground of our joy; we proceed to the second, the design of his birth. He was lord of the world; but came not into it to exercise dominion, nor as the Jews expected, to procure their temporal redemption, and restore the kingdom to Israel. He came not for so mean a purpose as the Jews expected, to procure their temporal redemption, to make his followers rich and

honourable, fortunate or conspicuous in the world; nay, both by precept and example he taught them to contemn and despise all such empty trifles: but he came to deliver his people from everlasting destruction, and from the captivity of sin, and to teach them how by a holy life they might obtain an endless happiness. He came not indeed to purchase us a liberty to sin, without hazard, and then to cover all our iniquities with his righteousness; to let us live as we list, and assure us of pardon. Nay, it had neither been consistent with his love to God, to have procured pardon for obstinate and incorrigible rebels; nor so great a benefit to us, to have obtained remission without sanctification. Had we been delivered from all other punishment, sin itself would have made us miserable. But Christ came into the world to save his people from their sins, as well as from the dismal consequences of them; and to procure for us, that, being delivered out of the hands of our enemies, we might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him. In a word, Christ came into the world to advance the glory of God, and the happiness of the earth, by restoring us to the favour of our maker, and a conformity to him. And certainly, if we have any sense of the evil of sin or the misery of hell, of the beauty of holiness or the glory of heaven, it must needs be a matter of great joy, to celebrate the birth of him who doth deliver us from the one, and give us assurance of the other.

It remaineth yet, that we speak of the circumstances of the nativity which we celebrate; and many things present themselves full of comfort and instruction. We shall only observe our Saviour's coming into the world after that manner which did best suit with his design. Indeed when a man should hear of the Son of God's coming down from heaven, and making a progress into the lower world, he would be apt to think that his appearance would be with the greatest splendour and magnificence, and that the glory of heaven should continually attend and signalize his person; at least, that all the princes in the world should be summoned to at-

tend his reception, and that the heavens should bow at his presence, and the earth tremble at the approach of his majesty, and that all the clouds should clap together in an universal thunder, to welcome his appearance. But, instead of all this pomp and grandeur, he slips into the world (as they say) incognito, is born in a village, discovered by some poor shepherds, and found by them in a stable, and such a homely cradle as that afforded, only attended by his poor mother; who, though of royal blood, had nothing but goodness to make her eminent. And his education was answerable to his obscure birth, and his whole life a course of humility and self-denial. Now certainly, this far best agrees with the design of his appearance, who came not on so mean an errand as to dazzle the eyes of mankind with the appearance of his glory, nor to amaze them with the terribleness of his majesty; much less to make a show of the riches and gallantry of the world amongst them; but to bring life and immortality to light, and lead men to eternal happiness. In order to which, it was necessary, that, by his example, as well as doctrine, he should disparage the vanities of the world, and bring them out of that credit and esteem they had gotten among foolish men.

I shall proceed no farther on this subject. I hope it doth appear that we have great reason to rejoice in the exaltation of the human nature, and the great salvation purchased to us by the incarnation of the Son of God. I shall add, that even this joy admits of holy fear; even on this occasion we must rejoice with trembling. Salvation is come into the world; but wo to them that neglect it! The gospel is preached; but there is great danger in slighting it. Let us therefore fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of us should come short of it. Little cause have obstinate sinners to rejoice on this festival. The time is coming that they shall wish that either Christ had never come into the world, or they had never heard of him: Behold, this child is set for the rise and fall of many. And they that are not the better, shall be the worse for his com-

ing. One way I must name, that many men set this child for their own fall, when they make this solemn anniversary an opportunity of sinning and debauchery; as if it where indeed a drunken Bacchus, and not a holy Jesus, whom they worshipped. What! sirs, because God became man, must we therefore become beasts? or think we to honour that child with dissoluteness, who came to the world on design of holiness? This it is, no doubt, that gives many men a prejudice against the festival itself, and perhaps is their most specious argument. We know an answer; but you may, and ought to afford another, by removing any ground of such a pretence. Indeed a forenoon's sermon will never compensate an afternoon's debauch; nor will your service in the church justify your intemperance at home. But as hereby at least some time is redeemed from the too frequent courses of the day, so I wish the time we spend here, may have some influence towards the right improvement of the rest; that our behaviour on the solemnity may be such as suits with the infinite holiness of that person whom we profess to honour, that we may serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling.

ON THE PASSION OF OUR SAVIOUR.

LAM. I. 12.

Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold and see, if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow.

We are to-morrow, God willing, to be employed in one of the highest and most solemn offices of our religion, to commemorate the death and sufferings of the blessed Jesus, and to receive the sacred pledge of his dying: and how much may the everlasting interests of our souls depend upon the right performing of this work!

It is not time now to discourse of the nature and ends of the sacrament we are about to celebrate; we are to suppose you already instructed in these: we shall rather fix our thoughts on those things which may have a more immediate influence to dispose us for so near and solemn an address unto God, and to assist and direct us in it. And I know nothing more proper for this purpose, than the serious consideration of those sufferings of our Saviour, which are to be symbolically represented unto us in that holy ordinance.

This passionate complaint of the prophet Jeremiah, which we have read, though in its first and literal sense it may refer to the sad condition of the Jewish nation and the holy city under the Babylonish captivity, (as many prophecies concerning the Messiah had a literal completion in those who were his types;) yet certainly in its highest and fullest sense it is only applicable to our blessed Saviour: of him alone it could be said, in strictness and propriety of speech, that there was never sorrow like his sorrow.

Let us then consider the words as our Saviour's complaint of the dulness and stupidity of men, who go up and down in the world, who come and pass, without regarding his sufferings, which were so grievous, wherein themselves are so nearly concerned. And from thence I would consider these three things.

1. The greatness of our Saviour's sufferings, expressed in these words, *See if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow.*

2. Our interest and concernment in them, insinuated in that passionate interrogation, *Is it nothing to you?*

3. That his sufferings ought not to be passed by, but seriously regarded and considered: *Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? &c.*

I. Let us reflect on our Saviour's sufferings. But O where shall we begin to recount them! His whole life, from the manger, his uneasy cradle, unto his cross and grave, was a continued tract of sufferings. He did all along answer that character given of him by the Prophet, A man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.

To say nothing of the meanness of his birth, and the pains of circumcision, the persecutions of his infancy, his poverty and want, his travail and weariness; his fasting and watching, his sweat and his tears, and all the other infirmities incident to our human nature, and inconveniences attending a poor and straitened estate; he could not but lead a very sad and afflicted life, considering that he lived in a perverse and wicked generation, and the continual trouble of being witness to the follies and miscarriages of wicked men; to hear and see dishonour done unto God by the profaneness of some, and hypocrisy of others; to observe the covetousness and injustice, the fraud and oppression, the malice and envy, and all the abominable lusts that abounded in the world in his days. We are commonly little concerned in the interests of religion; and therefore do apprehend but little trouble in these. But, if the soul of righteous Lot was grieved with the iniquities of the place where he lived, and if David is put to cry out, Wo is me that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar; how deeply do we think the blessed soul of the holy Jesus must needs have been pierced, by every blasphemous word that he heard, by every wicked action he beheld! Doubtless it was no small sorrow that made him cry out, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? Nor was he a little moved, when his zeal did carry him to that severity, which, if we did not consider the cause, would seem very unlike to the wonted meekness of his spirit, in whipping the traders out of the temple. And hereunto his tender compassion towards men, which could not but make him exceeding sorry, to see them frustrate the method of his mercy, and ruin themselves by their enmity against him; to hear them reproach the holy doctrine which he taught, and undervalue the miracles which he performed, or else condemn them as the unlawful effects of magical skill; that though he came unto his own, yet his own received him not; though he spake as never man spake, and did such works as would have converted Tyre and Sidon, yet did they baffle their

own reason, and persist in their infidelity, because, forsooth, they knew the place and manner of his education; as though his being reputed the carpenter's son, had been a sufficient answer to all that he could say or do. This was the occasion of his tears over that wretched and ungrateful city: O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.

We have no time to reflect on all the sad passages which occur in the history of our Saviour's life; let us fix our eyes a little on some of the last scenes, and we shall find them the blackest that ever were acted on the human nature. At the approach of death, it is said, he began to be sorrowful, as if he had never felt any grief before. His former afflictions were like scattered drops of rain; but, in this great deluge, all the fountains beneath, and all the windows of heaven were opened; the wrath of God against a sinful world, the malice and cruelty of men, the rage and fury of devils, break out together against him. If we take the measure of his sufferings by the apprehensions which he had of them before, we shall find that, when he is talking with his disciples about them, and encouraging himself and his followers with the assurance of the reward set before them; yet he doth not dissemble the fear and trouble wherewith he was seized: Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour, &c. Certainly, if there had been no more in his sufferings than what is commonly incident to human nature, as to endure pain or death, he who had a perfect innocency, the freest and most entire resignation, the fullest assurance of the reward to come, would never have been half so much affrighted with the apprehension of them. The view of that sad night's transaction, wherein he was delivered into the hands of sinners, presents us with a strange and amazing spectacle. Look into the garden,

and behold the Son of God prostrate with his face upon the ground, in the saddest discomposure of spirit that could possibly consist with his perfect innocency. He was sorrowful and very heavy, and tells his disciples, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death. It seems, had he remained long in this condition, his own grief would have killed him. Here it was that he suffered that which the Evangelist calleth an agony; but what the nature and measures of it were, he alone can tell who did feel it. It is not possible for us to comprehend the mixture of that bitter cup: yet we may guess some ingredients of it. And, first, without question, he had a clearer foresight of that painful and cursed death which he was so shortly after to undergo. This king of terrors did represent himself to him in his greatest pomp, clothed with all the circumstances of horror. And even this could not but be very dreadful, perhaps more to him than it would have been to some other person. There is a sort of natural stoutness and courage depending much on the temper and constitution of the body, and which doth commonly accompany the roughest and most stubborn natures; when those of a more sweet and benign disposition, are many times obnoxious to deeper impressions of fear. And it will not derogate from the honour of our blessed Saviour, though we should surpose, that, amongst other infirmities, he might be much liable to this natural and innocent passion. The true greatness of the soul, doth not consist in the vigour of the natural spirits, nor the sturdy boldness of an undaunted humour; but in a holy steadfastness and resolution to undergo those things which are dreadful to nature.

But certainly the fear of death was neither the only, nor the greatest thing that troubled our Saviour's spirit at that time. He had another sad and more dreadful prospect, the heinous and innumerable sins of mankind, whose nature he had taken, and whose iniquities he was to bear. He saw the whole world lying in wickedness, and ready to drop into eternal flames; he saw the anger of God kindled, and his hand lifted up; and

he knew that the stroke would light upon himself, and that the chastisement of our peace was to be upon him.

And, doubtless, it added not a little unto his grief, that he knew all that he had done, and all that he was about to suffer, would be slighted and despised by the greatest part of mankind. It grieved him to think, that many thousands, who were to be called by his name, would prove so base and unthankful, as to reject his love, and baffle his passion, and make a by-word of his blood and wounds; that one would prefer a strumpet, another his cups, a third his gold and money, to the mercies of a gracious God, and the unspeakable kindness of a dying Saviour.

Briefly, in this agony, our Saviour did struggle with the violent passion of fear and grief; which racked his joints, and stretched his sinews, till, in that cold night, and in the open air, a sweat, and that of blood, did issue forth, and moisten his garments, and tumbled down unto the ground. Now he came from Bozra with his garments dyed red; he had trodden the wine press alone, and of the people there was none with him. And now behold and see, if there was any sorrow like unto his sorrow.

But now he awaketh his drowsy disciples, and calls them to rise and be going; for behold he is at hand that betrays him. And scarce had he spoke the word, when behold the traitor, and with him a great multitude from the chief priests, and elders of the people. They come out as against a thief with swords and staves, for to take him. That monster of ingratitude gives them the signal; and with a horrid impudence, dares approach his infamous and sacrilegious lips to that sacred and venerable face; which we may reckon as the first wound he received from his enemies. O what an indignity, to be kissed by a traitor, an apostate, an enemy to God, possessed by the devil, and who was to be lodged in hell ere twenty-four hours expired. And O the insuperable meekness of our blessed Saviour, who suffers the indignity, and checks it with no harsher terms than this, Friend, wherefore art thou come? Judas, betrayest thou

the son of man with a kiss? Then he turneth unto the armed bands, and said unto them, Whom seek ye? They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, I am he. The meekness of this answer astonished the soldiers, and the power that accompanied it, made them go back and fall to the ground. And why did they not fall into hell? The wicked enterprise they were presently about to do did justly deserve it; and how easy was it for him to have done it? But his goodness restrained him; he meaned them no harm; but intended this fall to help them to rise; that the consideration of it, and the other evidences of his divinity, might one day bring them to a sense of their sins. Nor will he any further employ his miraculous power, but only in the cure of an enemy, whom his too forward disciple had wounded. But this doth not abate their malice. They lay hold on him, and drag him away in a great hurry and uproar, through that city where he had done so much good, and into which he had been lately received with joy and triumph, and loud acclamations: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord. They carry him from Annas to Caiaphas, from Caiaphas to Pilate, from Pilate to Herod, from Herod to Pilate again; treating him with all the indignities, all the instances of scorn and contempt that their malice could suggest unto them. Now, though our extreme impatience of ignominies and affronts, do much proceed from the pride and haughtiness of our spirits; yet is there in them a contrariety even to the innocent constitution of the human nature. Shame and disgrace are troublesome to all ingenuous spirits; so that, though they could not raise an immoderate passion in our blessed Saviour, yet his blessed spirit had a great abhorrence and detestation of that base and unworthy usage; which was infinitely heightened by the worth and excellency of the person who suffered it. What loyal heart can read or hear of the indignities done by the rude soldiers to our late sovereign, but with regret and abhorrence: But, alas! what are they, if compared with those that were put upon the king of

heaven, when they scoffed and reproached him, when they smote him on the cheek, and bound those hands which had cured so many diseases, and defiled that sacred face with spittle, which saints and angels delight to behold? All which he suffered with that meekness which the Prophet had foretold: He gave his back to the smiters, and his cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: he did not hide his face from shame and spitting. They would needs be ingenious in their scoffings, and mock him in all his offices. He was a Prophet, and they desire him to prophesy who it was that did smite him: he was a Priest, and they bid him save himself as he did others: he was a King, and they crown him with thorns, and array him with scarlet, and put a reed in his hand, and, in scorn, salute him, King of the Jews. Add unto this the violence done unto his virgin modesty, when he was stripped naked in the view of the rude multitude. It is reported of some virgin martyrs, that God, pitying their grief and trouble to have their nakedness discovered, when they were to be stripped of their clothes, did cover them with a veil of light, and send them to a modest and desired death. But the holy Jesus, who refused no shame, endured also this of nakedness, that we might be clothed with his righteousness.

But though it pleased their malice to have him exposed to all indignities imaginable; yet nothing would satisfy it but his torment and his death. He hath already had trial of cruel mockings, and now he must have scourgings too: they whip him with violent and unrelenting hands, tearing his tender flesh, and making long furrows in it. And, now, behold the man! behold him in that sad miserable plight wherein Pilate brought him forth, thinking to have appeased the malice of the Jews! his head pierced with briers, his face blue with strokes, his hands bound, that he could not so much as wipe off the blood which trickled down his eyes; his whole body discoloured with the marks of the scourge! From the top of his head, to the sole of his foot there was no soundness in him. Was there ever any sorrow like unto his sorrow?

There remaineth yet another scene, a very sad and dismal one. When nothing could prevail with the Jews, Pilate yieldeth, and delivereth our Saviour to their hands. They carry him away, so faint and weak with what he had already endured, that he could not bear the weight of his cross, but another must carry it for him. But now they nail him unto it, hang him up between two thieves, as the most notorious offender of the three. It cannot be expressed how painful this kind of death was. The very stretching forth of the arms without any weight, can hardly be endured any considerable time: but, when the weight of the body did hang upon them, and thereby tear the wounds that were made in the hands; when this torment was continued, till pain alone had overcome the power of nature, and forced the soul to dislodge without any hurt to the vital parts, scarce any could be invented more dreadful and cruel; to say nothing of the shame that attended it, being only destined for the meanest slaves, and the greatest offenders, those whom the lowness of their condition, or the greatness of their crimes, made unworthy of any respect. In this sad and painful posture did our Saviour hang, without any thing to comfort him. The holy angels, who were accustomed to serve him upon other occasions, do now disappear; not one of them to strengthen or relieve him. As for men, miserable comforters are they all: the soldiers scoff him; those that pass by exult over him; a companion of his sufferings adds unto them by his reproaches: his disciples had forsaken him; one of them had betrayed him, another forsworn him, a third run away from him naked, that he might not be apprehended with him. Indeed some devout women followed him out of the city; but their compassion did so little ease his grief, that he desired them to reserve their tears for the calamities that were to befall themselves: Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. He beheld the two persons that were the dearest to him in the world, his mother, and his friend, sitting under the cross; but all that they could do was but to lament and mourn; and this but redoubled his sorrow.

His blessed mother was bathed in tears; and felt the effects of old Simeon's prophecy, that a sword should pierce through her soul. And the beloved disciple, who was wont to lie in his bosom, lay still very near his heart; and it was a real suffering unto him, to see the anguish and sorrow whereinto his sufferings had cast them. Whither then could he look for comfort, but unto heaven? To whom could he flee, but to the arms of his Father? But O what strange, what astonishing words do we hear? My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Wonder, O earth! be astonished, O ye heavens! At this, men and angels admire and stand amazed! goodness and innocence itself forsaken by the author and fountain of goodness, the Son of God deserted by his heavenly Father! Certainly the soul of our blessed Saviour was still united to the divine nature, and was still as dear unto his Father as before; only the joyful sense of the divine love was suspended for a while; the faculties of his soul were discomposed, and a veil, as it were, drawn before the eyes of his mind, which intercepted the light of his Father's countenance; and that he felt not those refreshing emanations, which in the course of his life the Deity conveyed unto him. And, in that sad moment, his mind seems to have been so intent upon his sufferings, that he was diverted from the actual consideration of that glory which he purchased by them. Now, to be thus suspended from the perfect vision of God, to be divorced, as it were, from himself, and to lose the sense of those inward comforts which were wont to sustain him in all his adversities, how cutting must it needs be to his soul, so pure and holy, and which had so high a value for the divine love? Consider then, and see, if ever there was any sorrow like unto this sorrow.

Now it is finished, the sharp conflict is at a close; one cry more, and the blessed Jesus bowed down his head, and yielded up the ghost. No wonder then if the powers of heaven and earth be moved. The earth trembleth and shaketh, the rocks rent, the graves are opened, the vail of the temple was rent in two, the sun himself

shrunk in his beams, and darkness covered the face of the earth; which a learned man of Greece is said to have observed at that time, and from thence to have concluded, That either the God of nature suffered violence, or that the frame of the world was about to dissolve: *Aut Deus naturæ patitur, aut machina mundi solvitur.* Thus we have given you some rude imperfect hints of his great and unspeakable sufferings. But O how little of them do we understand to very good purpose! It was for this reason the ancient fathers of the Greek church in their liturgy, after they have recounted all the particular pains as they are set down in his passion, and by all and every one of them called for mercy, do after all shut up with this supplication: By thine unknown sorrows and sufferings, felt by thee, but not distinctly known by us, have mercy upon us and save us.

II. We proceed, in the next place, to consider the interest that we have in the suffering of our Saviour: *Is it nothing to you?* Have you no interest nor concernment at all in them! Much, certainly, every way. We were the occasion of his sufferings, and the benefits of them redound unto us. When we see a person undergo any sad and grievous punishment, we cannot choose but inquire into the grounds and occasions of their sufferings; and the rather if they have the reputation of innocence and integrity. And here not only the most innocent, but the most excellent person that ever was in the world, undergoes those dreadful sufferings which we mentioned before; who never had done any sin at all, neither was guile found in his mouth, so that the judge who condemned him, behoved first to condemn himself by a solemn acknowledgement of his innocence. He had gone up and down all his days doing good unto men, and scattering blessings where he came; healing the sick, restoring sight to the blind, and making the lame to walk, the dumb to speak, and the deaf to hear, feeding the hungry, and instructing all that would vouchsafe to hear him. For which of all these good works is he punished? Death is the wages of sin; how comes he to die that knew no sin? The Prophet Isaiah

gives us the answer: Surely, he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and by his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray: we have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. Messiah was cut off, but not for himself: He bare our sins in his own body on the tree; and gave his life a ransom for many. The race of mankind by their apostasy from God, were become liable to his wrath, and all the dreadful effects of his vengeance: the eternal Son of God, the Wisdom of the Father, whose delights were always with the sons of men, resolveth to make up the breach, and restore us again unto his Father's love: but first he must repair the honour of God, and secure the authority of the divine law; which could not be done, but by some signal evidence of God's displeasure against sin, and some valuable compensation of the punishment which had been denounced against it: and therefore himself was pleased to take our nature upon him, appear in the similitude of sinful flesh, to lead a miserable and afflicted life in the world, and at last to offer it up as a propitiation for us; that mercy and truth might meet together, and righteousness and peace kiss each other; and that God might at once be just, and also the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. Thus then the blessed Jesus endured all these sufferings for us and for our sins. In vain do we exclaim against the treason of Judas, the malice of the Jews, the injustice of Pilate? we have ourselves and our iniquities to blame: our covetousness and ambition exposed him to poverty and contempt, our excess and intemperance made him hunger and thirst, our levity and foolish mirth were the occasion of the anguish and bitterness of his soul; our sensual and sinful pleasures were the occasion of all the pains and tortures which he endured. And is it nothing unto us? shall we think ourselves unconcerned in these sad effects, whereof we were the unhappy cause?

Again, we are concerned in our Saviour's sufferings, as the benefits of them redound unto us. By his stripes we are healed. We have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of our sins: God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. We have access unto the throne of God, and boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us, through the vail, that is to say, his flesh. But this is not all: God hath not set him forth as a propitiation through faith in his blood, for the remission of sins that are past; but doth also, for his sake, bestow on us that grace, whereby we may be enabled to serve him in holiness and righteousness all the days of our lives. An amnesty; or act of oblivion for past offences, would never have served the turn; we should presently have run ourselves upon another score: nay, sin itself had been enough to make us miserable, though no other punishment had been inflicted upon us: and therefore he does not only cover our sins, but cures them; he forgives all our iniquities, and healeth all our diseases: as we are justified by his sufferings, so we are sanctified too through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. In a word, by the merits of our Saviour we are both reconciled unto God, and made partakers of the divine nature; we are both delivered from everlasting darkness, and made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. And now is it nothing to us? Can we think ourselves unconcerned in these sufferings, from which we reap so great so unspeakable advantages?

III. Having spoken of the greatness of our Saviour's sufferings, and the interest which we have in them, we think we should need to say little of the third particular which we proposed: you cannot but be convinced, that we ought to regard and consider them. Were it nothing to us, the very strangeness of the thing would deserve notice. The holy angels desire to pry into this mystery; they will contemplate and admire it to all eternity. And surely we are far more nearly concerned. What

an unaccountable dulness and negligence is it then, for men to go up and down the world amusing themselves with every trifle; hearing and telling of news about matters of the smallest importance, and never to consider the stupendous sufferings of their dying Saviour! They walk to and fro, they come and pass, and scarce vouchsafe to look upon him: or, if they chance to cast their eyes that way, it is a very short and overly view; they presently turn them away. And this occasions the complaint of the text, Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? But sure I am we can nowhere behold an object so worthy of our most serious and solemn regards. The whole world does not afford so useful and edifying a prospect. Here it is that we may best learn the horrid and heinous nature of sin, which could not be pardoned at a smaller rate. Here it is that we may discover most of the divine bounty and goodness to mankind, and the inexpressible love of our blessed Saviour and Redeemer; which are the most important lessons that we can learn. This made the blessed Apostle to determine to know nothing but Christ, and him crucified, to count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord. Let me therefore exhort you to fix the eyes of your mind, and call up your most serious attention; reach hither the hand of your faith, and thrust it into the hole of your Saviour's side; put your fingers into the print of the nails; lay to heart all the passages of his lamentable story; and this cannot choose but melt your hearts, unless they be harder than the rocks, and deafer than the bodies in the grave. Let us fix our eyes, I say, on this astonishing object, till our eyes affect our heart, that while we are musing, the fire may burn. Let us mourn for those sins wherewith we have crucified the Lord of glory, and be grieved that ever we should have put him to so much anguish and pain; and let us vow a perpetual enmity against our lusts and corrupt affections, which would crucify him afresh, and put him unto open shame. Let us consider and admire the wonderful love of our dying Saviour, that our souls may be kindled with reciprocal flames, wherein we may

offer up ourselves as a living and acceptable sacrifice unto him; that thus, Christ dwelling in our hearts by faith, we may be rooted and grounded in love; comprehending with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and height; and knowing the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that so we may be filled with all the fulness of God. Such meditations and exercises as these will purify and raise our souls, and best dispose us for approaching to the table of the Lord. And the Lord pour out upon us the spirit of grace and supplication, that we may look upon him whom we have pierced, and mourn for him as one mourneth for his only son, and be in bitterness for him as one that is in bitterness for his first-born.

A PREPARATION FOR THE HOLY SACRAMENT.

JOSH. III. 5.

Sanctify yourselves: for to-morrow the Lord will do wonders among you.

When God is to make any signal discovery and manifestation of himself to his people, he calleth them to solemn preparation, that they may be in a fit posture to attend and receive it. Three eminent instances whereof we meet with in the travels of his ancient people of Israel. The first is in Exodus xix. 10, 11. where, being to descend upon Sinai to promulgate a law, and enter into a covenant with them, the Lord said unto Moses, Go unto the people, and sanctify them to-day and to-morrow, and let them wash their clothes, and be ready against the third day: for the third day the Lord will come down in the sight of all the people. Thus also, when he was at once to satisfy and punish the inordinate appetite of that people who loathed the manna, and lusted after flesh, by bringing innumerable quails from the sea, and causing them to fall about their camp,

he commanded Moses to say unto the people, Sanctify yourselves against to-morrow, and ye shall eat flesh. A third instance is that of the text. The Lord had brought his people to the borders of Canaan, and was now to give them the seisin and possession of that promised land: he was to divide the waters of Jordan before them; and thereby both facilitate their passage, and assure their possession. Hereby, said Joshua, ye shall know that the living God is among you, and that he will without fail drive out from before you the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and Hivites, and the Perizzites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites and the Jebusites. Behold, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth, passeth over before you into Jordan. And it shall come to pass, as soon as the soles of the feet of the priests that bear the ark of the Lord, the Lord of all the earth, shall rest in the waters of Jordan, that the waters of Jordan shall be cut off from the waters that come down from above; and they shall stand upon an heap. Now, to dispose them for so great a mercy, Joshua gives them this advertisement in the text, Sanctify yourselves: for to-morrow the Lord will do wonders among you.

And sure this same advertisement must needs be very seasonable to us, who are expecting that God will manifest himself to-morrow in this place, in a way no less glorious, and far more comfortable and advantageous, than any of those we have mentioned unto you. We hope he shall descend from the habitation of his glory, that he will rend the heavens, and come down into this house, not with fire, and blackness, and darkness, and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words, which they that heard, entreated that the word should not be spoken unto them any more; because they could not endure that which was commanded: but with the gentle and enlivening flames of love, with the refreshing beams of divine light, with the still and quiet whisper of his Holy Spirit; which are only heard in calm and silent souls. He is coming to proclaim another law, a law of liberty and love; to enter into a new and bet-

ter covenant with us, not according to that covenant which he made with the house of Israel, in the day when he took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt: but this is the covenant he maketh with us, that he will put his laws into our minds, and write them in our hearts: and he will be to us a God, and we shall be to him a people; that he will be merciful to our unrighteousness, and remember our iniquities no more.

To-morrow the Lord will give us flesh to eat; not the flesh of quails and feathered fowls, to sustain this crazy and decaying frame; but the flesh and blood of the Son of man; that flesh which is meat indeed, and that blood which is drink indeed; which giveth life and everlasting happiness to the soul, and consigneth these mortal bodies to a blessed resurrection: for whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, (saith our Saviour) hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.

To-morrow the Lord will open a passage for his people towards the heavenly Canaan, place them, as it were, in the confines of that promised land, in the suburbs of happiness and glory: at least he will show them a token for good, and sign a right and security unto it. And, though floods of sin and sorrow were ready to overwhelm their souls, he will restrain and divert them: Surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto them. What fitter terms could we therefore choose to bespeak you in, than those of this holy man, Sanctify yourselves, for to-morrow, &c.

The words contain an exhortation, and a reason enforcing it. In applying them to the present occasion, we shall invert the order, and handle the latter part of the text first, because of the influence it hath on the former. We shall first tell you what those wonders are which the Lord is to do among us to-morrow; the consideration of them being of great use, both to excite us to sanctify and prepare ourselves, and also to instruct and direct us in it.

I. What then are those wonders we expect to see? A little bread broken and divided among us, a little wine poured forth and drunk. Is there any thing to surprise

and amaze us here? What better is this than our ordinary entertainment at home? Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Such may be the thoughts of profane and ignorant fools; for the outside of this ordinance is very poor and mean, hath nothing in it that may dazzle or delight the vulgar eye, that may please or affect a carnal mind: but those whose eyes are opened to right apprehensions of spiritual and divine things, can easily see through this coarse and contemptible vail, and discern astonishing wonders in this ordinance, wonders of power, and wisdom, and love.

If we consider what is represented to us in this sacrament, we have therein occasion to behold the most wonderful and astonishing spectacle that ever was seen in this lower world; the only begotten Son of God suffering for the sins of the world; the Lord of glory hanging between two thieves: for in this ordinance Jesus Christ is evidently set forth as crucified before our eyes. We may read and hear of it at other times; but this is a more clear and solemn representation of it: our dying Lord commanded us to do it in remembrance of him. Here our thoughts are more fixed, and our meditations higher raised; we get a nearer and more advantageous prospect. And our faith comes not only by the ear; our senses contribute unto it that we may say in some sense, with the beloved disciple, that we have not only heard, but have seen with our eyes, we have looked upon it, and our hands have handled the word of life. It is true, there might have been contrived a more sensible resemblance, and tragical representation of the death of Christ. That spectacle represented upon the scene, would perhaps affect our senses and fancy more, and might sooner draw tears from our eyes, and occasion some warm and affectionate passion. But it is a mean and low devotion that is seated in the inferior faculties of the soul, which outward objects do excite by their natural strength, without the exercise of the soul's considering and meditating powers. And therefore (as one hath well observ-

ed) " the representation of Christ's death in the sacrament is so ordered, that it might both help the soul, and leave it something to do in forming its own apprehensions and resentment." In it we see so much as to awaken our souls, but not so much as to keep them awake without themselves. The outward object serves to excite our faith; but then leaves it to its proper exercise and employment. Faith takes the hint which sense doth give it, and in the sacramental bread and wine can behold the blood and wounds of our blessed Saviour. It placeth us, as it were, at the foot of his cross, and makes us observe the whole transaction. And thus that holy ordinance we are to celebrate, presents to our view the wonderful redemption of mankind, which shall be the admiration of men and angels to all eternity: so that, if there were not more, on this account we might say in some sense, To-morrow the Lord will do wonders among you.

But this is not all. This sacrament doth not only represent a wonder that is already past, but exhibits one anew. The bread and wine that we receive, are not bare and empty signs, to put us in mind of the death and sufferings of Christ. Our Saviour calls them his body and blood: and such, without question, they are, to all spiritual purposes and advantages. We are not obliged to believe, that after consecration, the bread and wine do vanish, and the body and blood of Christ succeed in their room: our sense and reason do assure us of the contrary; the scriptures doth nowhere affirm it, nor did ever the ancient church believe it: nor is it possible to conceive the use or benefit of this strange and unintelligible change. It is the Spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing. These words of our Saviour, *are spirit and life*, are to be understood in a vital and spiritual sense. But though these elements be not changed in their nature and substance, yet they undergo a mighty change as to their efficacy and use; and that food which before could yield but little refreshment to the body, is now become a mean to nourish and

strengthen the soul, an instrument to convey unto us all those blessings that the body and blood of our Saviour can afford us.

As under the law a part of some sacrifices was burnt on the altar, and a part was eaten by those for whom they were offered—so our blessed Saviour, having offered up himself on the altar of the cross, as a propitiation for the sins of men, did substitute these holy symbols in place of his body and blood, that we, by feasting on them, might get an interest in that sacrifice, and be partakers of the atonement that was made, and the pardon that was purchased, by him.

Again, in this sacrament, Christ doth convey himself into the souls of men, and taketh stronger possession of them. As after the sop Satan entered into Judas, so with these holy elements Christ entereth into the hearts of his people, becomes the food and nourishment of their souls; he diffuseth himself through all their faculties, and animates them with his life and spirit; that they may have no will or affections of their own, no desires or inclinations different from his; but that every pulse may answer the motions of his heart, and all their powers be actuated and enlivened by his Spirit: in a word, that it may not be any more they, but Christ that liveth in them. Thus are we fed and nourished by the body and blood of Christ, while the power of the Godhead doth diffuse its virtue and operation into the human nature, to the enlivening the hearts of those who do rightly receive these sacramental pledges.

And thus I hope you see what wonders the Lord is to do among us. It was a signal miracle he wrought at the feast, when he turned water into wine; but sure it is a greater and more important one, to turn bread and wine into his body and blood, in that sense we have been explaining. It was a great matter to feed a multitude with a few loaves and small fishes; but a greater it is, to make a little bread and wine become a mean of nourishment to so many souls. And, were our eyes opened to the discerning of spiritual things, we should see greater things wrought, and more gracious miracles

performed, by the body and blood of our Saviour, than those which were done by the touch of his sacred body, while he lived here among men. I shall conclude this point in the words of St. Chrysostom, only desiring they may be understood according to what hath been already said, making some allowance for the rhetorical and hyperbolic style, Οταν ἰδῃς τον κυριον τεθυμενον, &c. "When thou dost behold the Lord of glory offered up, and the priest performing the sacrifice, and the people round about dyed and made red with that precious blood, where, I pray thee, dost thou conceive thyself to be? Canst thou think thou art yet upon earth, and conversing amongst mortal creatures; or art thou not rather on a sudden transported into heaven? Dost thou not lose all thoughts of the body, and with a pure mind, and naked soul, behold the things that are done above?" O the wonderful mercy and goodness of God! He who sitteth with the Father above, is at the same time present here below, and gives himself to all who will receive and embrace him. Compare this, if you will, with another miracle. Imagine you see the great Elias with an infinite number of people about him, the sacrifice laid upon the stones, and all the rest quiet and silent, while the prophet poureth forth his prayers, then the fire coming down on a sudden from heaven, and consuming the sacrifice. Truly these things are strange, and full of wonder: but yet are far inferior to our sacred and tremendous mysteries; for here the priest doth not bring fire, but the Holy Ghost: he prayeth not that a flame may descend from heaven to consume the holy things before him, but that the divine grace, influencing the sacrifice, may thereby inflame the hearts and souls of all the people, and render them more pure than silver tried in the fire. Doubtless, when these sacred and venerable mysteries are performing, the holy angels do stand by, and the place is full of blessed and glorious spirits, who delight to look and pry into them; and all the orders of the heavenly host shout, and raise their voices together.

[The rest is wanting.]

OF THE IMPORTANCE AND DIFFICULTY OF THE MINISTERIAL FUNCTION.

[Preached before the Synod of Aberdeen.]

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2 COR. II. 16.

Who is sufficient for these things?

REVEREND and dearly beloved men, brethren, and fathers, It is one of the advantages of that peace and tranquillity wherewith Almighty God is pleased to bless this poor church, that the officers of it have liberty of assembling together on these occasions, for mutual assistance and counsel in the exercise of their holy function. And, indeed, if there were no matter of public deliberation, yet ought we gladly to embrace the opportunity of seeing one another's faces, not only that we may maintain and express a brotherly correspondence and affection, but also that we may animate and excite one another unto greater measures of diligence and zeal; as coals, being gathered together, do mutually receive and propagate some new degrees of vigour and heat. This I have always looked upon as none of the meanest advantages of these synodical meetings; and shall think myself very happy, if my poor endeavours, in the performance of this present duty, may, by the divine blessing, contribute any thing towards this excellent and desirable purpose. To this end, I have made choice of a text which I hope may afford us some useful meditations, for stirring up and awakening in our souls a deeper sense of those great engagements under which we lie.

The blessed Apostle, in the former verse, and beginning of this, has been speaking of the different success the gospel did meet with among those to whom it was preached; that it was not like those weak and harmless

medicines, which, if they do no good, are sure to do no hurt; but like some perfumes which are comfortable and strengthening to the wholesome, but troublesome and noxious to the weak; so doth it prove a vital savour to those who receive and obey it, but a most deadly poison to all who reject and despise it: For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, to them that are saved, and in them that perish; to the one we are a savour of death unto death, and to the other a savour of life unto life. And then he takes occasion to consider what a great matter it is to be employed in those administrations wherein the happiness and misery of mankind is so nearly concerned, Καὶ τίς ἱκανὸς πρὸς ταῦτα, &c.; and who is sufficient for these things?

We shall not detain you with an explication of the words. Two things, I conceive, are implied in them: 1. The importance; 2. The difficulty of the Ministerial function. For if a business be of small concern, it is little matter who have the management of it; there is no great harm done if it miscarry; any body is sufficient for that thing. On the other hand, let the matter be never so weighty, if there be no difficulty in it, there needs no extraordinary endowments in those to whom it is committed: common prudence and a little care will suffice; there is no likelihood that it can miscarry. But the work of the ministry is at once so important and so difficult—of so great consequence and so hard to be performed, that there is a great deal of reason for an emphatic interrogation, Who is sufficient for these things?

I. First, Let us fix our thoughts awhile on the weight and importance of the ministry, and we shall find that it is a greater burden lying on our shoulders, than if the greatest affairs of this world were devolved upon us, and we did hold up the pillars of the earth. This will appear, whether we consider the relation we stand in to the Almighty God, or the charge of the flocks we have committed to us.

To begin with the first. That infinite Majesty which created, and doth continually uphold the earth, and all things in it, as the just owner and lord of the whole cre-

ation, (for all are his servants, and must obey his will,) is yet pleased to claim a special property in some things which he chooseth for himself, and employeth for peculiar designs: Nevertheless of old did he choose a house for himself, and a place to be called by his name. At Salem was his tabernacle, and his dwelling-place in Zion. The Lord loved the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob. And the church, in all ages, hath thought it fit to separate some places from vulgar and common use, and to appropriate them to the service of God. Again, Though all times and seasons do belong unto God, yet hath he set apart a day for his worship, and sanctified a sabbath for himself. All men were created for the honour of God, and are infinitely obliged to serve him; yet, because the greatest part of mankind are too much engaged in worldly affairs, and have their souls fettered in the distracting cares of this life, and almost buried in their bodies, it hath pleased the divine wisdom to call forth a select number of men, who, being delivered from those entanglements, and having their minds more highly purified, and more peculiarly fitted for the offices of religion, may attend continually on that very thing. Religion is every man's general calling; but it is our particular calling too: and, while the labourer is at his plough, the craftsman at his forge, and the merchant in his shop, the minister ought to be employed in the exercise of devotion, for the interest of advancing piety, and the honour of our Maker. My beloved, ye are deputed, as it were, by the whole creation, at least by the inferior world, to present their homage and service to God, and to praise him for all his works. You ought to maintain a correspondence between heaven and earth, to deprecate the wrath of God, and avert his vengeance and plagues from mankind. Your business is the same with that of the holy angels: you dwell in the house of God, and should be continually praising him. And this is an employment so holy, that, were our souls as pure as cherubs, as zealous and active as the blessed spirits that are above, we should yet have reason to cover our faces, and to be swallowed up in a deep sense

of our own insufficiency for these things. And what is sinful dust and ashes, that he should stand in so near a relation unto the Lord of glory! What is man, O blessed God, that thou shouldst choose him, and cause him to approach unto thee! that he should dwell in thy courts; and be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thine holy temple! The priesthood, under the law, was a very sacred and venerable thing, and no profane hand might intermeddle with the meanest offices that belonged unto it. All the zeal and seemingly religious care that Uzzah had for the tottering ark, served not to excuse his presumption, when he intruded upon the Levitical function: but, certainly, as the gospel ministry is so much more excellent and sublime, being intrusted with the administration of those holy mysteries which were but shadowed in the former—how pure and holy ought those lips to be, by which God speaketh unto his people, and by which they speak unto him; which sometimes pronounce those powerful and effectual sentences of absolution and excommunication, that are so surely ratified in heaven: and those hands which are employed in the laver of regeneration, and to handle the bread of life! *Hi sunt*, (saith holy Chrysostom, de sacerd. lib. 3.) *quibus*, &c. "These are the men that assist at the pangs of the new birth, and to whom baptismal regeneration is committed: by those we put on Christ, and are buried with the Son of God, and so become members of that blessed head. Upon which account the sacerdotal function is more creditable than that of kings and princes; and we owe more honour unto priests, than unto parents themselves; for they have begotten us of blood, and of the will of the flesh; but these are the authors of that nativity which we have from God; that adoption, whereby, through grace, we become the children of the Most High." And, again, the same father, speaking of the sacerdotal power, expresses it in these terms: *Qui terram incolunt, atque in ea versantur, his commissum est, ut ea quæ in cælis sunt dispensent*, &c. "Men that live on earth, do dispense the things that are in heaven; and are intrusted with a pow-

er that neither angels nor archangels can pretend unto: for to none of these was it said, What ye bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven. Earthly princes have the power of binding, but it is only the bodies of men. These bands that I speak of, take hold of the souls of men, and reach unto the very heavens; so that God doth ratify above; what the priest determines below; and his servants' decrees are ratified by their Lord. The Father hath given all judgment to the Son; but now, it seems, the Son does deliver it to the pastors of the church. And so eminent is this authority, that one would think the persons invested with it, must needs be raised above the common condition of men, and exempted from human affections, and, as it were, already placed in heaven." Thus far this holy father. Nor can I pass by what he says of that ineffable privilege of the celebration of the holy sacrament, though some of his expressions, being figurative and hyperbolical, have been abused by the Romish party: *Dum conspicis Dominum in immolatione, et sacerdotem sacrificio incumbentem*,&c.—"When thou dost behold the Lord of glory offered up, and the priest performing the sacrifice, and the people round about dyed, as it were, and made red with that precious blood; where, I pray thee, dost thou conceive thyself to be? Dost thou think thou art on earth, and conversing among mortal creatures: or art thou not rather on a sudden transported into heaven? Dost thou not lose all thoughts of the body, and material things, and with a pure mind, and naked soul, behold the things that are done in those regions above? And when the minister has invoked the divine Spirit, and performed those reverend and dreadful mysteries, and holdeth the Lord of all things in his hand, tell me, I beseech you, in what order of things we are to place him? What uprightness, what purity is required of him! what hands should they be that administer those things! what lips that utter and pronounce those words! For at that time the holy angels stand by the priest; the place is full of blessed spirits, who desire to look into those things; and all the orders of the heavenly host do shout, and raise

their voice together, as we may easily believe, if we consider the work that is then in hand." I cannot stand to relate all that this excellent person speaketh to the same purpose, but shall proceed to the next thing we proposed.

The weight and importance of the ministerial function, considered in relation to the people committed to our charge. We are not intrusted with their fortune or estate, nor with their bodily health and welfare, nor with the affairs of state, or the interest of kingdoms; though, indeed, religion hath no small influence on these, and the labours of ministers, if successful, would contribute exceedingly to the public tranquillity, and the present felicity of men. But our main business lieth another way. We have to do with rational and immortal souls, those most noble and divine substances which proceeded from God, and are capable of being united to him eternally, but withal in hazard of being eternally separated from him; these ἀμφισβητήματα τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ δαίμονων, as Synesius calls them, these stakes between God and the devil: and on us it doth in some measure depend to whose share they shall fall, whether they shall be angels or fiends. We may say with reason of our work, what the painter did vainly boast of, *Laboramus æternitati:* The impresses we make shall last for ever. My beloved, the most serious of our thoughts come very far short of the inestimable worth of the depositum, that treasure which is committed to our care. He who did create and redeem the souls of men, doth best understand their value: and we see what esteem he putteth upon them, by the pains he is pleased to take about them. Their salvation was contrived before the mountains were brought forth, before the foundation of the earth was laid; the design was formed from all eternity; and glorious are the methods by which it is accomplished. *Huc magistra lex tendit: huc, inter Christum et legem interjecti, prophetæ*, saith St. Greg. Naz. "At this both the law and the prophets did aim." *Huc exinanita Deitas: huc assumpta caro; huc nova illa mixtio.* "To this pur-

pose did the Deity empty itself, and was clothed with the human nature; to this purpose was that strange and wonderful conjunction, God and man united together!" Hitherto did all the actions and all the sufferings of our blessed Saviour aim—for this he was born, and for this he did die. And shall we undervalue the price of his blood, or think it a small matter to have the charge of those for whom it was shed? It is the church of God we must oversee and feed; that church for which the world is upheld, which is sanctified by the Holy Ghost, on which the angels themselves do attend. What a weighty charge is this we have undertaken! Who is sufficient for these things?

That these matters may yet take the deeper impression on our hearts, let us farther consider the dreadful consequences of miscarriage in the discharge of the ministerial function; and we shall find that it reflects a great deal of dishonour on the divine Majesty, and on our blessed Saviour; that it doth very much hazard the souls of our people, and certainly ruins our own. I say, it doth reflect dishonour on Almighty God, as the faults of servants do commonly prejudice the reputation of their masters, and the failings of ambassadors are imputed to their princes. We stand in a nearer relation to God, and are supposed to be best acquainted with his will, and to carry the deepest impressions of his nature on our minds. And ignorant people will entertain the meaner thoughts of the holiness of God, when they miss it in those who are called his servants. Certainly it is no small reproach which the faults or miscarriages of ministers do bring upon the ways of godliness, and the holy religion we profess. It is no small affront that is hereby put on the blessed author of it; greater, without question, than all the malice and spite of his open enemies is able to practise: for hereby he is crucified afresh, and put unto open shame. And O how great is the hazard our poor people do run by our negligence or failings, even as much as the worth of their souls amounteth to! If the watchmen be not faithful, and give not timely warning, the sword will readily come, and the people

be taken away in their sins. *Causa sunt ruinæ populi sacerdotes mali.* Like people, like priests, will still be a proverb of a general truth. But if the negligence and miscarriage of a minister doth hazard the souls of others, it doth certainly ruin his own; which made St. Chrysostom say, *Equidem ex ecclesiæ ministris non arbitror multos servari;* words so terrible, that I tremble to put them into English: and yet, if a man should speak fire, blood, and smoke—if flames could come out of his mouth instead of words—if he had a voice like thunder, and an eye like lightning, he could not sufficiently represent the dreadful account that an unfaithful pastor shall make. What horror and confusion shall it cast them into at the last day, to hear the blood of the Son of God plead against them—to hear our great master say, It was the purchase of my blood which ye did neglect! God died for these souls, of whom ye took so little pains! think not, therefore, to be saved by that blood which ye have despised, or to escape the torments whereunto many others are plunged through your faults! By this time I hope it doth appear, that the work of the ministry is of great weight and importance; that much doth depend on the right discharging of it; and that miscarrying in it is the most dangerous thing in the world.

II. The second thing we had to speak to, is the difficulty of managing this charge aright. And this will appear, if we consider, 1. The end and design of the ministerial function: 2. The impediments we have to overcome in the prosecution of that end: and, 3. The several sorts of duties and exercises incumbent upon us. As for the first—The great business of our calling is, to advance the divine life in the world; to make religion sway and prevail; frame and mould the souls of men into a conformity to God, and superinduce the beautiful lineaments of his blessed image upon them; to enlighten their understandings, and inform their judgments, rectify their wills, and order their passions, and sanctify all their affections. The world lieth in sin: and it is our work to awaken men out of their deadly sleep—to res-

cue them out of that dismal condition. We are the instruments of God for effecting these great designs; and though we be not accountable for the success, when we have done what lieth in our power, yet nothing below this should be our aim; and we should never cease our endeavours, until that gracious change be wrought in every person committed to our charge. And, if any think this an easy work, let them pitch on some person of their acquaintance, whom they know to be addicted to some one particular vice, and try whether it be easy to reclaim him. Persuade the drunkard, if you can, to forsake his cups; the covetous wretch, to part with his money; reason but the wild gallant into serious thoughts, and a grave and sober deportment; try to purge your neighbourhood of gross crimes, and scandalous vices; and persuade those that live about you, to live at least as becomes men. In this you have the advantage of dealing with that self-love, which does prevail in them. You may easily convince them that the practice of these virtues you recommend, would contribute much to their temporal felicity, to those interests of pleasure, advantage, and honour, to which they have the greatest regard—and yet you shall find even this task not easy to be performed. But to raise men unto the greatest heights of mortification and self-denial; to make them truly humble, meek, and resigned to the will of God; to overpower that selfish principle which is so deeply rooted in the constitution of our souls, and doth so readily insinuate itself into all our affections and designs; to set divine love and universal charity upon the throne, that the honour of God, and the welfare of others, may be as dear unto men as their own concerns; to have religion become another nature unto them, and they, as it were, a living law unto themselves: this, this is so great and wonderful a change, that, as only omnipotence is able to produce it, so certainly they have a mighty task who are employed as instruments in it.

Again, let me appeal to the conscience and experience of every one, what difficulty they find in dealing with their own souls, in regulating their own passions,

and in mortifying their own corrupt affections: yet here we have the advantage of a nearer application; we can carry home our reasons with more force upon ourselves than others; our thoughts and meditations must be more clear and lively than our words and expressions are. If it be hard, then, to persuade ourselves to be good, it is sure much harder to persuade others to be so.

Consider, in the next place, the enemies we have to encounter with, which oppose the design of our employments. We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers. All the forces of hell are up in arms against us—all the powers of darkness do continually oppose us; and little do we know those hidden arts whereby these accursed spirits do apply themselves to the souls of men, to suggest and insinuate their temptations. The world, also, with all its cares and pleasures, is daily fighting against us; and there is no estate or condition in it, but what is surrounded with a thousand temptations. The poor are so much taken up in providing for the necessities of this life, that they can hardly be persuaded to think upon another. The rich are commonly drowned in sensual pleasures; and our Saviour tells us, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven. The influence of sensual objects is very strong. And though the possessions of the other world be as far beyond our enjoyments here, as this world is above nothing; yet, because the things of this world are present, and are ever and anon offering themselves unto us, and bearing upon our senses, therefore they do too frequently prevail against all the persuasions of reason and religion too. And what shall we say of the evil company and bad example that inveigles the souls of men? We, perhaps, see them once a week, and bring them to some degree of sobriety, and a sound mind; but then their wicked neighbours, and the companions of their sin, do meet them every day, and, by their counsel and example, obliterate any good impression that has been made upon them: and hereby we lose more in a week, than

we are able to recover in a whole year. But the greatest enemies we have, are those within the souls of men: their depraved affections, their lusts and corrupt inclinations. When physicians undertake the cure of bodily distempers, they have the consent of the party; he is ready to comply with their prescriptions. But our greatest difficulty is in dealing with the wills of men, and making them consent to be cured. They hug the disease, and shun the medicine as poison, and have no desire to be well. Hence it is, they do all they can to keep us strangers to their souls, and take as much pains to conceal their inward distempers, as they ought to do in revealing them. We have justly shaken off the tyranny of the Romish confession: but, alas! our people go too far in the other extreme; and, because they are not obliged to tell every thing to their pastors, in effect they acquaint them with nothing at all. Perhaps some persons, lying under some terrors and trouble of mind, may apply themselves unto us, to give vent to the fire that burneth within them; but otherwise they content themselves to see us in the pulpit, and care not how little we be acquainted with their temper and way. It will be long ere any come to tell us, that they find themselves proud, or passionate, or revengeful, and inquire how they shall get these vices subdued; that they are covetous and uncharitable, and beseech us to tell them how they shall amend; to acquaint us with their temptations, and to learn the fittest methods to oppose them. We are seldom troubled with addresses of this nature; and it is hard to do any thing towards a cure, when they will not let us know the disease.

The difficulty of the ministerial function will further appear, if we will consider the several duties and exercises of it. We shall but touch at some of them at present, and may perhaps have occasion to speak more in the application.

Catechising is a necessary but painful one. It is no small toil, to tell the same things a thousand times to some dull and ignorant people, who, perhaps, shall know but little when we have done. It is this labori-

ous exercise that does sometimes tempt a minister to envy the condition of those who gain their living by the sweat of their brows, without the toil and distraction of their spirits.

Preaching is an exercise that many are ambitious of, and none more than those that are least qualified for it; and, it is probable, the desire of this liberty is no small temptation to some of our giddy people to go over to that sect and party, where all ranks, and both sexes, are allowed the satisfaction to hear themselves talk in public. But it is not so easy a matter to perform this task aright; to stand in the presence of God, and to speak to his people in his name, with that plainness and simplicity, that seriousness and gravity, that zeal and concern, which the business requires: to accommodate ourselves to the capacity of the common people, without disgusting our more knowing hearers by the insipid flatness of our discourse; to excite and awaken drowsy souls, without terrifying and disturbing more tender consciences: to bear home the convictions of sin, without the appearance of some personal reflection; in a word, to approve ourselves unto God as workmen that need not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

Discipline is an edged tool; and they had need be no fools that meddle with it. It is a hard thing to manage the processes of the censures of the church with such care and prudence, that may neither encourage flagitious persons by our remissness, nor tempt to irritate others by needless severity, nor give advantage to captious and troublesome men for want of some legal formality.

But certainly the greatest and most difficult work of a minister is, in applying himself particularly to the several persons under his charge; to acquaint himself with their behaviour, and the temper of their souls; to redress what is amiss, and prevent their future miscarriages. Without this private work, his other endeavours will do little good. And, considering the great variety that is among the humours and dispositions of men, (equal, al-

most; to that of their faces,) this must needs be an infinite labour. It is the art of arts, (saith Gregory Nazianzen in his Apologetic Oration,) and the most difficult of all sciences, to govern such a manifold and various creature as man. And another Gregory hath written a whole tractate of the diversity there is amongst men's tempers, and the several ways of dealing with them. What a martyrdom is it for some modest and bashful tempers, when they find themselves obliged to use freedom and severity in reproving the faults of those who, in quality or age, are above themselves! And, O what a hard matter it is to deal with people that are ready to leave the world, and step in upon eternity; when their souls do, as it were, hang on their lips, and they have one foot (as we use to say) already in the grave. The minister is seldom sent for till the physician has given the patient over; and then they beg him to dress their souls for heaven, when their windingsheet is preparing, and their friends are almost ready to dress the body for the funeral. Now, though some of these have lived well, and, like the wise virgins, have oil in their lamps —yet it is a great matter to calm them, and to dispose their souls for that great change they are presently to undergo. But, alas! it fares otherwise with the greatest part. They are yet strangers to the ways of religion, the work of their salvation is yet to begin, and their lusts to be mortified, their corruptions subdued, the whole frame of their souls to be changed: and though they have scarce so much strength as to turn them on their beds, yet their warfare against principalities, powers, and spiritual wickedness is but newly commenced; their work is great, their disadvantages many, and the time very short that is before them. Perhaps they are dull and insensible, and we shall hardly persuade them of their danger. They will acknowledge they are sinners, and so are all others, as well as they: they trust to the mercies of Christ, and have confidence enough of their salvation; and cannot be persuaded they want any thing that is necessary for the same. Others of these, again, are seized with fear, and call for the minister to comfort

them. What shall he do? Shall he tell them that all their terrors are just, and it is now too late to repent? I know some divines are peremptory in this case, and think they should be left in despair: but, sure, it were a sad employment for a minister, to go to visit a dying man, only to tell him he is damned; and withal it is too great boldness in us, to limit the grace and mercy of God. True and sincere repentance will never come too late; but, certainly, a deathbed repentance is seldom sincere: and it is hard either for the minister, or the man himself, to tell whether it be only the fear of hell, or a true and godly sorrow that he feeleth in his soul. All that a minister can do, is, to press him to all possible seriousness, and to resign himself to God for the event; or to lay before him, in general, the terms and conditions of the gospel-covenant: the application will be hard and uncertain.

These, and many more, are the difficulties of the ministerial function. It was not without a great deal of reason that one of the fathers did call it, *Onus angelicis humeris formidandum:* "A weight under which angels' shoulders might shrink." Hence it was, that the holy men of old have been so mightily afraid to undertake it. Jeremiah, who was sanctified from the womb, and ordained a prophet to the nations, when he received his commission, he cried out, Ah! Lord God, behold, I cannot speak, for I am a child. And Ezekiel though strengthened and confirmed by God, yet went unwillingly; yea, in the bitterness and indignation of his spirit. And, in the ancient church, the more eminent and great persons were in piety and worth, the more sensible they were of the greatness of this charge, and the more loth to engage in it. Some of them have fled into the mountains and deserts, or hid themselves in the dens and caverns of the earth; and were more afraid to be laid hands on by the bishop, than by the most bloody persecutors. Three times did Ambrose flee from Milan; and it is reported, that after he had travelled hard all night, he found himself next morning at the outer gate of that city he endeavoured to avoid. Gregory Nazianzen,

being taken in his flight, and ordained by force, did compose that excellent oration which is at the beginning of his works; wherein he doth so well express the greatness and the danger of the ministry, that the reading of it (and I wish it were frequently and attentively read) might, I think, do much to quell the confidence of the most confident intruders. Augustine entered, by chance, into the church of Hippo, just as the bishop Valerius was speaking to the people concerning the choice of a minister, of whom they stood in great need. He was presently pitched upon, and almost ordained by force, after he had, with tears, deprecated the charge; and, in these strange terms: *Quid! vultis ut peream?* intimating the hazard he should thereby run. And Chrysostom professeth of himself, that, when he was chosen to a bishopric, his soul and body were almost parted asunder, so great was the grief and fear that seized upon his spirits; and that he did many times wonder how it had ever entered into the minds of those that chose him, or what great offence that church had been guilty of, which had provoked God to suffer it to be committed to such an unworthy person. So sensible were these excellent men of the difficulties of this holy function, even in those first and golden ages of the church; and certainly they are much augmented to us, who live in these dregs of time, wherein religion is almost banished out of the world, the principles of it called in question by many pretenders to judgment and wit, and the practice not only neglected but derided; insomuch that men are frighted from godliness by the contempt that lieth upon it: *Mali esse coguntur, ne ridiculi fiant.* We have a world of wickedness to fight against; and *who is sufficient for these things?*

Thus, having prosecuted the importance of the text, it is time to make some application of it. And, first, I shall address myself to those of the laity who vouchsafe us their presence, that they may not think their time mispent in some hours of attendance.

You see, dear people, what a weighty and difficult charge they have to whom your souls are committed.

Whence is it, then, that some of you account the ministerial function the most useless employment in the commonwealth, and that which might be most easily spared? and that ministers have easy lives, gaining their living by the breath of their mouths, as some of you are pleased to word it? Whence is it that this holy calling comes to be so much despised, and that the names of Minister, Parson, or Priest, are become words of ignominy and contempt? And whatever advantages of birth and education a minister may have, yet his employment is thought enough to degrade him, and put him below every one that can pretend to the name of a gentleman?

Again, how comes it that those small gleanings of the church's patrimony, which sacrilege and oppression have left us, should yet be envied, and looked upon with an evil eye; and that a clergyman, who has spent his time, and much of his fortune, in the schools of the prophets, to fit himself for that employment wherein he may be most beneficial to mankind, should yet be maligned for a small annuity during life, which, perhaps, amounts not to the gains of the meanest tradesman? And yet, if those persons had chosen another employment—had taken Galen or Justinian for their masters, perhaps they would have had parts and abilities sufficient to have advanced themselves to wealth and honours, as well as others, and would not have been envied for it. My beloved, I account him not worthy of the name of a minister of Christ, who cannot patiently suffer injury, contempt, and envy. But certainly it is no good part in the people, to put these upon them: it is a shrewd token that they have a small regard to piety and religion, and that their own souls are the things about them for which they have the least concern. Learn, I beseech you, dear Christians, learn to take more rational measures of things. Think how much you are indebted to the divine goodness, which hath taken so great care of your everlasting happiness, as to set apart an order of men, whose business it shall be to promote and advance it. Do all that you can to encourage and assist them in their work;

give them the encouragement of your constant attendance, and assist them, by helping to instruct those children and servants who are under your several charges. Apply yourselves frequently to them for advice and direction, and be often putting up that important question, What shall we do to be saved? Yield them that submission and obedience which is due unto them in the Lord. Go not to church to sit as judges, and censure the sermon when you return. If you be not pleased with it, your ignorance or indisposition may be the cause, and modesty should oblige you to silence. If you be taken with what you have heard, spend not your time in talk about it; practice is the best way to commend it. Beware of that spiritual pride and conceitedness, which makes the people to strive with their priests; which the prophet Hosea notes as an heinous sin. Finally, to sum up your duty in the Apostle's words, Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account: that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.

I might, in the next place, take an occasion from what hath been said, to press the great obligation that lieth on patrons of churches, to seek out, and to make choice of those whom they judge to be best qualified for so high and weighty a charge; and might show, that it is no small guilt that he draws upon himself, who presents a person to the care of souls, of whose prudence and fidelity it may be he hath so little confidence, that he durst not intrust him with the management of his fortune, or the tutory of his child; while, perhaps, others are overlooked, that might be capable to do much more service in the church, merely because they have not the good luck to be related or recommended to the patron, or because they have less money, or more conscience than to bargain for the living. But I forbear this: and shall crave liberty of this venerable auditory, to take this occasion of doing something that relates to my peculiar function, in speaking a little to those sons of the prophets, those candidates of holy orders, whose diligence and study aim

at the ministry, and who are to be employed in the vineyard of God, when the present labourers shall be called off to receive their reward. You see, sirs, what a dreadful and important charge it is to which you aspire. Consider, I beseech you, what great pains are necessary to fit and qualify you for it. Ordinary callings are not learned without a long apprenticeship, and will the art of governing souls be learned on a sudden? It is not knowledge of controversy, or the gift of eloquence, much less a strong voice and bold confidence that will qualify you for it. The errors that abound among us, make it necessary, indeed, that you should know how to deal with the adversaries; for the clergy are many times put to the pass the Jews were, at the building of the second temple; with one hand they must build the house of God, and with the other they must hold a weapon: yet certainly your greatest work lies within, in purifying your minds, and learning that wisdom which is necessary for souls. Begin then, I pray you, and preach to your passions, and try what good you can do to your friends and neighbours. Study that gravity and seriousness, that humility and self-denial, that purity and mortification, that becometh those who may one day stand in so near a relation to God, and bear so eminent a charge in his church. Be not too hasty and forward in rushing into public; it is better you be drawn than run. Nazianzen complains of some in his time, who, with profane hearts and unwashed hands, did rush into the holy function, and, before they were fit to receive the sacrament, would take upon them to celebrate it; and though they be not come unto the age of men, if they have learned some pious words, think themselves fit to be overseers of others: *O præfecturum! O elatum animum! Sacer etiam a cunabulis Samuel! Sapientes et magistri sumus!* This, I say, was the humour of some in his days; and I am afraid the case is not much better in ours. But if you be truly sensible of what you are to undertake, you would think no time too much, to be spent in preparation for it.

It remains yet that I address myself briefly to you,

my Reverend brethren, and Right Reverend fathers. We have been endeavouring to lay before you the importance and difficulty of your employment; and you know them much better than we can tell you. But these things ought not to discourage you, or make you faint under the weight, but rather to animate and excite your care. As Alexander said once of an eminent hazard he had encountered, that now he had met with a danger worthy his courage: so may I say of your work, that it is a business worthy your zeal, and the love and affection which you owe unto your blessed master. And, indeed, you can give no greater testimony of it, than by a faithful and conscientious discharge of the duties of your calling. If your work is great, your reward is infinitely greater: and you have Omnipotence engaged in your assistance. Up and be doing, and the Lord shall be with you: only let us be careful to maintain such a deep and constant sense of the engagements we lie under, as may awaken us unto the greatest diligence and watchfulness, both over ourselves and others.

As for the particulars of your duty, I dare not take upon me to be an instructer, who have much more need to learn my own; yet, since I am not placed here to be altogether silent, I shall offer to you the Apostle's exhortation to Titus, chap. ii. 15., and take the liberty to insist a little upon the particulars of it: These things speak and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee. These things speak. Here he pointeth at that which ought to be the matter of our doctrine and instruction. We are not to entertain our people with subtle speculations, metaphysical niceties, perplexed notions, and foolish questions, which engender strife; but let us speak the things which become sound doctrine. Let us frequently inculcate the great and uncontroverted truths of our religion, and trouble our people no further with controversy than necessity doth require. Let us study to acquaint them with the tenor of the gospel-covenant, and what they must do to be saved; to inform them of the particular duties they owe both to God and man: for the Apostle had before been speak-

ing of the duties to be recommended to every one according to their several capacities and relations. And, indeed, it were not amiss, that in catechising, ministers would bring home the articles of faith by practical improvements, both teaching men their particular duties, and pressing them to the performance. But it is not enough to speak these things—to tell men what is incumbent upon them: we must, besides, endeavour to excite and stir them up, by the most powerful and effectual persuasions; the judgment being informed, we must do all to influence the affections: and this is the proper use of our preaching; which, though it be overvalued by those who place all religion in hearing, yet certainly it is of excellent use, and ought to be managed with a great deal of care. Let the matter be weighty and grave, the method plain and clear, the expression neither soaring on the one hand, nor too familiar on the other. Some good men are not aware what contempt they draw on religion by their coarse and homely allusions, and the silly and trivial proverbs they make use of. Nor should our expressions be too soft or effeminate, nor our pronunciation affected or childish. Religion is a rational and manly thing; and we should strive to recommend it with the greatest advantage. But, above all, let us study such a zeal and fervour, as, flowing from the deep sense of the thing we speak, and being regulated with prudence and decency, may be fittest to reach the hearts of the hearers. The vulgar that commonly sit under the pulpit, (as the excellent Herbert speaks,) are commonly as hard and dead as the seats they sit on, and need a mountain of fire to kindle them. The best way is, to preach the things first to ourselves, and then frequently to recollect in whose presence we are, and whose business we are doing. And I think it no small advantage that some of a neighbouring nation have, who make some considerable pause when they have done with a point, that they may raise their souls towards God, and that the people may renew their attention.

But when we have done all that we can by public and general exhortation, we shall effectuate very little

without a more particular application to the persons under our charge. Interest and self-love will blind the eyes, and stop the ears of men, and make them shift off from themselves those admonitions from the pulpit that are displeasing: and therefore we are commanded not only to teach and exhort, but also to rebuke with all authority. Now, those whom we are to rebuke, are either persons of a different persuasion, who dissent from our religion, or withdraw from our ordinances; and these must be dealt with very patiently, and with much long suffering. It is not to be expected, that an hasty conference, or an abrupt disputation, should prevail with those who have been long habituated to false persuasions, and, perhaps, have drunk them in with the first of their serious thoughts, and religious inclinations. We must first study to combat the perverseness of their will, the prejudices of the world, the desire of victory and applause, their pre-engagement in a party, and their shame and unwillingness to yield; and strive to render them meek and pliable, and sincerely desirous to know the truth. When we have obtained this, they will be both more easily convinced, and more inexcusable, if through weakness they still continue in their errors. But let us never rest in having drawn over a person to our party, till we have engaged him to seriousness in the practice of religion; for if he continue a stranger to that, it is little matter whether he be Protestant or Papist, Pagan or Mahometan, or any thing else in the world: nay, the better his religion is, the more dreadful will his condemnation be. It was an excellent saying of an eminent and holy person yet alive in our church, "That he would rather be instrumental in persuading one man to be serious in religion, than the whole nation to be conformists." The other sort of persons we have to rebuke, are those of our own religion, for the vices and failings of their lives. And this must be done with a great deal of courage and zeal—of prudence and discretion—of meekness and love. More knowing and ingenious persons may be dealt with sometimes by secret insinuations, and oblique reflections on the vices they are guilty

of; and we may sometimes seek a way to reprove their failings, by regretting and condemning our own. But that artifice is not necessary with the vulgar: having professed our love and good intentions, it will be best to fall roundly to the matter. Now this does suppose a great deal of care, to acquaint ourselves with the humours and conversation of our people; and the name of watchmen that is given us, implieth no less. And though the lamentable vastness of some of our charges make it impossible to do all that we could wish, yet must we not fail to do all that we can. It is an excellent practice of some I have the happiness to be acquainted with, who seldom miss any day wherein they do not apply themselves to some or other of their people, and treat about the affairs of their souls.

Another thing which may be implied in rebuking with all authority, is, the conscientious exercise of that authority which Christ hath given us in the public censures and rebukes of the church. But of this I shall say no more, save only that it were an intolerable presumption, and horrid sacrilege, to make use of these to serve the ends of our passion and private revenge.

The last clause of the passage we cited, sounds somewhat strange: Let no man despise thee. Sure nobody desires to be despised; and it is not always in the power of man to hinder it. But the meaning of the words is, that there should be nothing in our carriage and deportment which may deserve contempt. We ought still to have that apology of the orator in readiness: *Quid putem? contemptumne me? Equidem non video quid sit in vita moribusque nostris quod despicere possit.* There is nothing that doth expose a minister to so much contempt, as a vicious and irreligious deportment. Even those who are profane themselves, and love vice in their other companions, do yet abhor it in a clergyman, as thinking it too gross and disingenuous, to practise all the week what he hath been condemning on Sunday. I shall not insist upon the grosser sort of vices. *Nolo tam male ominari de ecclesia:* I would not bode so much evil to the church, as to imagine the clergy capa-

ble of them. I shall point but to a few things, which, though less heinous in their nature, tend to the contempt and disrespect of the clergy.

And first, the least imputation of covetousness doth a great deal of mischief this way. And you know it will be reckoned covetousness in you, which is not so in others. You will be more blamed for taking your own, than they for encroaching on their neighbours. And therefore, to prevent this imputation, so far as the meanness of a minister's provision, and necessity of his family, will permit, he should show himself frank and liberal in his dealings, especially with the poorer sort.

Another occasion of contempt is, the too much frequenting the company of the laicks, and a vain and trifling conversation among them. It was a wise saying, whoever he was that spoke it, *Quotidiana clericorum cum laicis conversatio contemptibiles ipsos reddit.* And that of Hierom to Nepotian is very observable, *Facile contemnitur clericus si ad prandium invitatus sæpius veniat.* A minister, in his conversation, ought carefully to avoid all foolish and excessive jesting, and immoderate mirth. I could never think it a good character of a clergyman, to call him a merry fellow, or a notable droll; and yet I do not condemn all cheerfulness and freedom, nor the innocent exercise of wit: but it is one thing to make use of these now and then, when they come in our way—and another, to search and hunt after them; and those who have the knack of it, are ready enough to fall into excess.

A third thing which will bring a clergyman into contempt, is, an unallowable patience in hearing his master dishonoured by the oaths and profane talk of those of whom he standeth in awe. My brethren, if we had no more but the common principles of ingenuity and honour, they might make us resent these as greater affronts than if men should spit in our faces: and yet this is but one of the meanest engagements that lie upon us, to check these exhorbitances with the greatest severity.

I shall name but another, and it is this: when men, on design to avoid this contempt, would seem to dis-

claim their employment, by imitating the habit and deportment of secular persons; when they study the gentleman so much, that they forget the clergyman. If we be ashamed of our own employment, no wonder if others despise it. Far different were the thoughts of that worthy gentleman, and excellent minister, whom I named before, that sweet singer of Israel, Mr. Herbert, who, the same night that he was admitted into the office of the ministry, said to his friend, "I now look back on my aspiring thoughts, and I think myself more happy, than if I had obtained what I so ambitiously thirsted for. And I can now behold the court with an impartial eye, and see plainly, that it is made up of fraud, and titles, and flattery, and many such other imaginary painted pleasures. My greatest ambition from henceforth shall be, that I bring glory to my Jesus, whom I have this day taken to be my master and governor; and am so proud of his service, that I will always observe and obey, and do his will, and always call him Jesus my master. I will always contemn my birth, and any title or dignity that can be conferred upon me, when I shall compare them with the title of being a Priest, and serving at the altar of Jesus my master."

I am afraid I have encroached too far on your patience. I shall close all with a serious obtestation of our great apostle to Timothy; which you may believe I durst not utter in my own name, but in the name of the great master of us all: I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing, and his kingdom: preach the word, be instant in season, and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine. And the Lord of his mercy, so assist and prosper us all in his own work, that we may be the happy instruments of advancing his kingdom, and the welfare of souls, through Jesus Christ our Lord. To whom, &c.

A

SERMON

PREACHED AT THE FUNERAL

OF THE

REV. HENRY SCOUGAL, A.M.

BY GEORGE GAIRDEN, D.D.

PHIL. I. 21.

For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

It hath been the usual practice of all nations in the world, of whatsoever religion, sect, or persuasion, to leave upon record to after ages, the lives and memorable actions of those who have been eminent among them for great or good actions. And however this practice may have been abused, sometimes to serve the interest of a sect or party, or other undue ends; yet that the memory of good men ought thus to be transmitted to posterity, may be deduced both from Scripture and common reason; it being fit thus to manifest the grace and goodness of God in men, and thereby to advance his glory and kingdom; and to make their light so shine before others, that they may be useful instructions to the world, and incentives to follow their examples. To this we owe the remembrance of all those good and great men recorded in the Old Testament: nay, on this is grounded the establishment and purity of our most holy religion. We have left us the memorials of the life and

doctrine of our blessed Lord and Master in the holy gospels, and the acts of his Apostles, whom he sent to convert the world. And the pious Christians of succeeding ages, according to this pattern, were careful, both by public discourses and writings, to awaken their own and after times, with the remembrance of the zeal and piety of holy and devout persons.

And now, if, by the general practice and consent of all men, records of exemplary piety and goodness be thus useful to posterity, even though they be strangers to the persons of those whose lives and actions are transmitted to them; I am sure we have much reason to think, that some seasonable and useful meditations, at such a time and in such a place as this is, may have some influence on our minds, when we have here before us the remains of our departed friend, who hath so lately left this world; whose presence and conversation was so comfortable to us; whose innocence and goodness were so exemplary; whose good-will, affection, and beneficence were so sincere and universal; whose remembrance is so dear to us; who was so much the stay and honour of our church, and so universally beloved and esteemed by all. Sure the sense of all these, and the sight of all this funeral attendance, cannot but cast our souls into some deep thoughts. And to this I doubt not but your hearts bear witness. Would I could say something useful for your meditations, and suitable to your present temper and this subject! God assist and direct our thoughts.

When I reflect upon the life and spirit of our friend, (of the which I have had the honour and happiness to have been so frequent an observer,) and when I consider the constant temper and disposition of his soul, as to this and the other world, the great resignation of his mind, his willingness to stay here, that he might do some service to his ever-blessed Maker and Redeemer; and yet his cheerful thoughts and apprehensions of that happiness that is above, and his ardent breathings after it: methinks I hear always from him the words of St. Paul, To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

I shall not trouble you with any large explanation, nor with the various readings of these words; we shall only consider them in their most obvious sense and meaning. The blessed Apostle being in bonds at Rome, writes this letter to the Philippians, to exhort them to a perseverance in the faith of Christ, and to have their conversation suitable to it. And, that they might not be discouraged by his bonds, he tells them the happy fruits of them, how much they had conduced for the furtherance of the gospel; that the knowledge of his suffering with such constancy for that religion which he had formerly so zealously opposed, was spread throughout that city, and manifest in the palace itself: so that many thereby were converted to the faith of Christ, and others strengthened in it, and made more bold to preach the gospel; so that Christ was preached everywhere, by some, out of envy at the glory and fame he acquired in planting the gospel there, and by others, in sincerity, and out of love and good-will. So that he hoped, whether by life or death, Christ should be magnified in him; if he lived, by his constant preaching his gospel, and living his life; if he died, by signing the truth of it with his blood: For me to live is Christ. "The whole of my life in this world, the end of my living here, the great aim of all my thoughts, and designs, and actions, is Christ; to be endued with his Spirit, and lead his life; to spread his gospel, and enlarge his kingdom. I have no other design than this. God knows, and the world sees, whether I mind riches, or pleasures, or glory among men. No: I have consecrated my life and spirit to my blessed Lord and master; and they shall be employed in his service. Christ is my life: so that I live; yet not so much I, as Christ that liveth in me."

Few words, but full of sense and truth. They are not like those airy expressions which, when searched into, have nothing but fancy and imagination at the bottom of them; but they contain the very marrow of Christianity, and the whole of a Christian spirit; the complete character of his life, and a perfect instruction for ours. And this will appear if we consider a little more distinct-

ly their importance. For one to live to another, may be said in two respects: 1. When he is endued with the same spirit, and has the same temper of mind, and leads the same kind of life; and, 2. When his heart and his life is wholly devoted to his love and service; when he loves him above all, and minds nothing more than his interest, and employs his life in serving his designs, and doing his will. And, in both these respects, (which, indeed, cannot be separated,) we may consider the Apostle's words, To me to live is Christ; or, Christ is my life.

I. First, As he was endued with the Spirit, and led the life of his blessed master: Be ye followers of me, saith he, even as I also am of Christ. And, indeed, this is the great design of Christianity, and the truest character of a Christian. All our duty and all our happiness consists in the being like unto God, and the living in that dependence upon, and subjection to him, that reasonable creatures owe their Almighty Creator. Now, seeing God dwelleth in that light which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen nor can see; therefore the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him. He hath clothed himself with our flesh, and become man, and conversed amongst us, like one of ourselves, and shown us what the Father is, and how we must be like him. Would we know how God would live amongst us, were he clothed with our nature and infirmities, if he dwelt in our flesh, and were visible to our eyes? Behold the Son of God, consider his life and Spirit, and this is the life of God; for he is the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person. Would we learn how far our nature is capable of being like unto God, how we must be partakers of the divine nature, and be renewed in the spirit of our minds, putting on the new man, which, after God is created in righteousness and true holiness? Consider Jesus Christ, subject to the infirmities of our nature, and living the life of God. Behold he hath given us an example, that we should follow his steps. He is the light of the world; and they

that follow him, shall not walk in darkness. In him was life, and his life was the light of men, though darkness comprehended it not. Consider the profound humility of his soul; the great meekness of his spirit; the entire resignation of his will to his heavenly Father; the unspotted purity of his desires and affections, wholly mortified as to this lower world; the ardency of his love to God, and his zeal and delight to do his will; his wonderful patience under the greatest sufferings; his uninterested, sincere, and boundless charity towards men, doing good even to those who hated and persecuted him, and dying for those who crucified him. In these, and in all other graces, he hath gone before us, and called upon us to learn of him, and follow him. For this end did he live and die, to endue us with his Spirit, and change our nature into his. He humbled himself to our nature, that he might make us partake of his: he hath revealed unto us the nature of God, and his undeserved grace and goodness to us, and our unspeakable misery, and corruption, and estrangement from our heavenly Father; and hath put us again into a capacity of being his children, he himself becoming our elder brother. He hath raised us unto the hopes of the enjoyment of God for evermore in boundless felicity, that we might thus purify ourselves as God is pure. He hath breathed his Holy Spirit into the world, to inspire us with his life, and changed us into his image; and he hath told us, that without this we shall never see the face of God. We have therefore all the obligations in the world to make Christ our life, and to follow Jesus. This is the only mark and character whereby God will own and acknowledge us for his. It is, besides, our greatest glory and honour, to imitate so blessed an example, and a wonderful expression of goodness and condescension, for the Son of God to come down from heaven to give us this pattern. He is the most perfect example of purity and holiness, in whom there was no spot nor blemish; who had no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth; but his life was uniform, and always pure, and constant to himself. And yet he hath given us the most plain

and familiar copy, and the most exactly fitted to the state and condition of men in this world. He did not retire into cells and cloisters, as if none could walk as he walked but monks and recluses; but he conversed freely in the world, and lived in cities and villages, in company and converse with others. His piety did not break forth into severe fasting, and an excess of other bodily austerities, in ecstatic raptures, and enthusiastic fits, such as the lives of the famed saints of the Romish church are stuffed with; but it was a plain life, of justice and charity, meekness and humility, patience and contentedness, and a readiness to do good to all men; a life that is imitable by all, from the greatest prince to the poorest peasant. The very importance of our name and profession, the calling ourselves Christians, obliges us to follow the example, and lead the life of Christ. And, if we mean not this by it, we mean nothing to the purpose: for he that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also to walk, even as he walked. Nay, it is this only, the being endued with his Spirit, that can entitle us to an interest in him, and that happiness which he has purchased for us: for if any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his; so great and many are the obligations that we have to follow Jesus. His commands are nothing but the transcript of his own life and Spirit: we ought always to have him in our eye; and in every disposition of our soul, in every undertaking and design; to consider how our blessed master would have done in these circumstances, and aspire always to have the same mind that was in him; and never rest till Christ be formed in us.

But, alas! how unlike are we to the holy Jesus! Christians in name and profession, but not in deed and in truth. How unworthy a character would it make of him, to measure him by the lives and spirits of those who call themselves his followers. Alas! in what passages or period of life can we say sincerly, To me to live is Christ? Do we propose to ourselves the same designs? Are we endued with any spark of his boundless charity? Do our souls burn with love to God, or have

we such a sincere good will to our neighbours? Are our desires and affections crucified to this world, and enlivened towards heaven? Yea, what conformity is there in our outward lives unto his most holy laws? Where is that forwardness to do good to all men, that meek suffering of injuries, and ready forgiving of enemies, and doing them good? Is scraping and scrambling after wealth, and this world's trifles; is rioting and wallowing in sensual pleasures, and living like brutes; is contending for places and glory among men; is strife and envy, contention and evil speaking, and other such-like works of the flesh—are these, I say, becoming the followers of Jesus Christ? Is this to live like him, or are they the fruits of his Spirit? Nay, sure, in this our hearts must condemn us; and, alas! our lives do testify against us.

But, indeed, well might the Apostle say, To me to live is Christ, who was so much endued with his Spirit, and conformed to his life; whom nothing could separate from the love of God; who rejoiced as much in suffering his will, as in doing it; who was so often in labour, and stripes, and prisons, in perils of all sorts, in watching, and hunger, and thirst, in fastings, and cold, and nakedness; so far was he from enjoying the pleasures of the world: who knew so well both how to abound and be in want, and in whatsoever state, therewith to be content; who was so much crucified to the world, and the world unto him; whose love and charity was so exuberant and boundless towards his brethren, being ready to spend and to be spent for them, though the more he loved, the less he was loved again; who travelled through the world to make men better, and spared no labour or pains to make them happy; spending his life in this employment, and enduring all kinds of hardships in it. So that, in a word, he lived; yet not so much he, as Christ that lived in him.

II. But, secondly, these words do import, that his heart and life were devoted to the service of Christ; that he loved him above all things, and minded nothing more than his interest, and employed his life in serving his de-

signs, and doing his will, and lived by his faith. The life of man in this world, is to be considered both as to the inward and outward man. The former, which is that of the soul, consists in the understanding, the will, and the affections; the other, being the outward life and conversation, is regulated according to the inward dispositions of the soul. And as a man's sentiments and dispositions are, such is his life. Now, as the life of the body is strangely disordered, when the blood and spirits do not run in their ordinary course, but make convulsive and involuntary motions, which are nothing useful to the body, nor guided by the will; so the life of our souls is so corrupted, as that we may be said to be dead while we live, when our judgment is blind and false, our will perverse and crooked, our affections earthly and carnal, and we do not follow the will of God. And this is the state of our life by nature. What a strange blindness is there in the spirit of man? We understand almost nothing of the greatest things, and judge perversely of other things. How little do we know of God, of our souls, of their misery, or wherein their true happiness consists, or of the state after this life? And how perversely do we judge of the trifles of this life, as if our happiness and our all were summed up in them? How corrupt are the affections and dispositions of our hearts! We love what we ought to hate; we trust what will certainly fail us, and distrust that which should be our only confidence; we fear that which can do us no harm, and are regardless of our greatest dangers: we busy ourselves about trifles, or things that will certainly ruin us, and do not mind our greatest interests. Now Jesus Christ is come into the world full of grace and truth, to renew the spirit of our minds, and to change the disposition of our hearts, and the course of our lives: and the life that we ought to lead, is by the faith of the Son of God, who loved us and gave himself for us. We must not live by sense, and our own foolish passions, and sentiments of things; but according to those sentiments and that faith that he by his word and Spirit inspires us with. To serve Jesus Christ, is to live by his faith; and to live by the

faith of the Son of God, is to judge and esteem of things as he has revealed them, and as he would have us, and accordingly to guide and direct our hearts and lives; to love what he bids us love, and hate what he would have us to hate; to hope and trust in his promises; to do what he commands, and forbear and avoid what he forbids; and to employ our life in doing his will, and serving his designs. He hath taught us to make a right judgment and estimate of things; to have a deep sense of the unspeakable misery and sinfulness of our corrupt nature, of the infinite greatness, goodness, and mercy of God, and the wonderful contrivance and value of our redemption. He has shown us the worth and the degeneracy of our souls, and what great things they are capable of by the pure grace and favour of God. He hath laid open the deceitful appearances of this present world, and the great moment of that eternity of joy or misery that awaits us hereafter. He hath made known to us what great things he hath done and suffered for us, and what boundless compassion and love he has for such undeserving creatures. Now, the spring of that life we should live by the faith of Jesus Christ, is, to have our understandings renewed and enlightened, and to judge sincerely and aright of these things, according as he, who is truth itself, hath revealed them unto us: and that not to gratify our curiosity in knowing them, or making them matter of vanity, and talk to others; for then we know nothing as we ought: but to have such a deep sense and feeling of them, as to enliven our hearts, and guide our practices. For then do we truly live by the faith of Christ, when the sense of our own sinfulness and misery sinks us into the deepest humility, and sincere abhorrence of ourselves; and the thoughts of the unspeakable goodness, love, and mercy of God, and what our ever-blessed Redeemer hath done, suffered, and purchased for us, inspires our hearts with ardent love to them; and this becomes the spring of all our actions; makes us delight to do his will, and be well pleased to suffer it; and study always to promote his interest in the world, to make

him be known and loved by all we can; and seek his glory and honour in all we do, and not our own.

Thus to us to live is Christ. Thus ought we to guide our understandings by his light, to inflame our hearts with his love, to spend our lives in his service, and direct our actions to his glory. But, alas! how generally are those who call themselves Christians, void of this life and spirit? Who is there that sincerely makes an estimate and judgment of things, according to the light of Jesus Christ? that thinks himself worthy to be truly hated by all? that really counts the honours and promotions, the wealth and pleasures of this world, as so many snares to his soul? that heartily values the favour and approbation of God, beyond the esteem and praise of men? And however some men may have some fruitless speculations in their understandings about such-like truths, yet, alas! how few suffer them to sink into their hearts, and direct their lives? Where is the love of Jesus? the lively hopes and ardent desires after the glory that is to be revealed? the true fear of God, or trust in him, or a sincere desire and delight to do his will? And whatever professions may be made of all these, yet where do the fruits of them appear in men's lives and conversations? for the tree is known by its fruit. How few actions are there that seem to proceed from the hearty love of Christ? Wherein do we sincerely aim at the good of men, and the happiness of their souls? When do we singly propose to ourselves the glory of God, and the doing him service? What instances are there in our conversation that seem to flow from an unfeigned humility, and truly mean thoughts of ourselves? Alas! it would puzzle us, I fear, to instance the action or period of our life that flowed purely from such principles. We are creatures of sense, and guided by other measures; the love of reputation among men; a concern for the conveniences and pleasures of this life, and an aversion to the troubles of it; a desire of transcending others in power, wealth, and knowledge; a natural sloth of spirit, and inconsideration of mind; and, which is the root of

all, pride, and a blind and inordinate self-love. These are the springs that put all in motion; by these principles we are guided in our designs, they mingle themselves with our best performances: and an impartial consideration may make us sensible, that there are few actions wherein some one or other of these have not always a great stroke and interest.

But it is far otherwise with St. Paul; who, however, before his conversion, was actuated by a blind zeal, yet, no sooner had that glorious light which dazzled the eyes of his body, enlightened those of his mind, but he made appear, by his life and spirit, that he lived by the faith of the Son of God, and that to him to live was Christ. How did that light and life shine before men; and how manifest were they in him, who counted all things but dung and loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus! who gloried in nothing so much as his cross, by which the world was crucified to him, and he unto the world? who reckoned the sufferings of this present time not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed? whom neither worldly advantage, nor the greatest crosses and afflictions, neither the power or malice of devils and men could separate from the love of Christ? who gloried in nothing more than in suffering for him? whose zeal was so great, and his industry and diligence so vigorous, and his care and management so prudent and wise, in propagating his life and spirit, and spreading his doctrine? who made so sudden a change throughout the world, and so many nations his disciples? whose divine letters have so much tended to the establishment and propagation of the gospel in that and all succeeding generations; a single passage of one of which, occasioned the conversion of one of the greatest fathers of the church: in which holy epistles the Christian doctrine is so well represented; wherein persons of all ranks and conditions have their duties so clearly described; where bishops, and pastors, and people, rich and poor, husband and wife, parents and children, masters and servants, the prosperous and the afflicted, may learn their

Christian duty and deportment in their several circumstances.

But I forbear to speak of that great Apostle of the Gentiles. The present occasion leads us hither; nor shall I presume to make a parallel. I know there is one glory of the sun, another of the moon, and another of the stars: and one star differeth from another in glory. As the happiness of the other world, so the piety and goodness of this have their degrees and measures. I shall only consider, for our instruction, how, in its own measure, the life and spirit of our friend do breath forth the same sentiments, To me to live is Christ; how his life and example, his conversation and instructions, his thoughts and designs, the inward endowments and dispositions of his soul, and the outward deportment and actions of his life, were, as to the main, the fruits and effects of a Christian spirit, of a holy and divine temper of mind; and how they all tended, and were employed, to increase the same in himself, and stir it up in others, and to revive something of the ancient Christian piety and goodness in the world.

To me to live is Christ. Indeed well may it be said of his life, whose early beginnings and first blossoms were seasoned with pious inclinations, as well as the maturer periods of it. The right managing of infancy and childhood, is ordinarily the least of a parent's care; and any pious exercises are usually the least of children's thoughts. Every trifle tickles their fancies, and takes up their spirits: little passions and envies, and other issues of our natural corruption, begin to sprout forth even in that tender age. But in our deceased friend, as it was his father's pious design to devote him to the service of God and his church in this holy function, who did therefore take a suitable care even of his infancy and childhood; so his pious inclinations, and the suitable dispositions of his spirit, did happily conspire with it; and he gave early indications of them even in those tender years. He was not taken up with the plays and little diversions of those of his age, (which children so much

doat upon;) but, upon such occasions, did usually retire from them; and that, not out of sullenness of humour, or dullness of spirit, (the sweetness and serenity of whose temper did even then appear,) but out of a staidness of mind, going to some privacy, and employing his time in reading, prayer, and such serious thoughts as that age was capable of. Sometimes he would be taken up with the thoughts of the law of Moses, wondering how altars and sacrifices, and its other ceremonies, were not now among the exercises of our worship; at other times employing himself in little imitations of the exercises of the holy function, as preaching, and the like. And among other instances of the happy fruits of such retirements, this deserves to be remembered, that, being once in a serious reflection what course of life he should take that might be conducive to the salvation of his soul, and being in a deep muse of thoughts, he takes up the Bible to read a portion of it: and though he was always averse to the making a lottery of the Holy Scriptures, yet he could not but take notice of the first words which, accidentally, he cast his eyes upon, and which made no small impression on his spirit; 'By what means shall a young man learn to purify his way? by taking heed thereto, according to thy word.' The diversions he was then most taken with, did speak out the greatness of his mind and spirit; and he seemed to act all the grandeur of this world while a child: when, in learning the Latin he began to understand the Roman story, he retired usually with the most ingenious of his fellows, composed little orations, and acted the parts of the Roman senators. I cannot here omit that vastness of memory, and forwardness of judgment, which did even then appear; in that, when he began to take notice of the daily reading of the Holy Scriptures at home, he could not only repeat several verses at that time, whether the historical or other parts; but afterwards, upon the turning to any one particular chapter, could call them to remembrance; and whereas those of that age can, for the most part, remember only some little incoherent passages of public sermons, he did usually take up their whole scope, and

give a brief account of them. And though children generally love only the society of their fellows, or such as can entertain them with silly and foolish stories; yet such was the seriousness of his spirit, and the love he even then had for knowledge and good men, that when he had an opportunity of hearing serious and reverend persons, who used to resort to his father's house, he was careful to attend to them, and listen to their wise and pious discourses. His improvements in human literature were beyond the ordinary attainments of his age; having not only acquired a singular and unaffected elegance in the Latin tongue, but also a considerable proficiency in Greek, in the Hebrew, and some other of the oriental languages; being versed, also, in history, and in geometry, and other parts of the mathematics. And such was the clearness of his apprehension, and the forwardness of his judgment, that, upon the overhearing an occasional discourse of some who were passing their first years in the University, he did quickly take up the nature of a syllogism, the use of the symbols in contriving it, and could readily form one upon any subject.

Such were his attainments, and such was the temper of his spirit in that early period of his life, which others for the most part spend in vanity and folly, and begin to repent of, when they come to think themselves men. And we may see how much a prudent father's wise and pious care, when it meets with a fit temper and disposition in a child, may contribute to plant the seeds of those virtuous endowments and good inclinations in that tender age, which will bring forth much fruit in their riper years; and with how much reason the wise man bids us, Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.

But the paths of the just are as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day. These were the early dawnings of piety and goodness, which appeared in him in those first years of his age, before he came to this corner of our land; and there became still more manifest and conspicuous. His improvements had now fitted him for the University: and here he gave fur-

ther proofs of a pious disposition and a capacious understanding. He was far removed from those levities and foolish customs, those little animosities and strifes which the inconsiderate youth are sometimes guilty of; but was even then grave and staid in his deportment, as was observed by all, yet free and unaffected. The learning that was then in fashion, though he saw quite through it, yet it did not satisfy his understanding, nor could he perceive its use, save to wrangle pro and con about any thing. He was desirous to dive into the nature of things, and not be involved into a strife of hard words, and a maze of nice distinctions: and, therefore, by his own proper industry, and private study, he became, even then, master of that philosophy which has now got such footing in the world; besides a singular proficiency he made in the several parts of mathematics, in history, and other human learning. But he was always careful to beware of any philosophy or false knowledge that was apt to have a bad influence on the mind, and debauch the spirit, as to a right sense of God and religion; and never suffered himself to be tainted in the least with such. And there was nothing that more endeared any philosophical truths to him, than when they gave right apprehensions of God, and just thoughts of morality and virtue. His mind being always composed to a religious temper, he even then made it his business, by the frequent reading of the most pious and useful books, and a happy conversation, sanctified by a constant devotion, and an unprejudiced mind, to frame to himself, amidst the various opinions and distractions of Christendom, right apprehensions of religion, and accordingly to suit his practice: so that, even then, religion was the matter of his serious and impartial choice, and not merely the prejudice of custom and education. He used sometimes to write essays of morality, and occasional meditations; which as they were singularly eloquent and ingenious, so they breathed forth the devotion of his mind, and the seriousness of his spirit; and would very well become a riper age. It being the custom of the youth to have private meetings about the ordering the concerns of their

commencements, where he was made constant president among his fellows, his discourses to them were so grave and becoming, (as some of them have professed,) that they looked upon them as the sayings of a gray head, and thought they savoured of the wisdom of a senator.

Such was his deportment and improvement for the few years he resided in the University: so that, in the esteem of all, he did not a little honour that degree which is then given, of which some are said to be so much the reproach. And, therefore, he no sooner came out of the University, but he was thought worthy to be a master, where he had been so lately a scholar; and, after having given sufficient proofs of his fitness, by teaching for the next term the class of one who was occasionally absent, he was accordingly promoted: and even in this station, *to him to live was Christ.* He was careful so to behave himself in his own conversation, and in the exercises of that office, as to preserve his own conscience pure, and void of offence, and to serve the interests of Christianity; training up the youth in such principles of learning and goodness, as might make them most serviceable both to church and state. He was careful not to drive on little designs, or maintain factions and heats in the society, but studied always to compose them; and when it would not do, they were his regret; but he was sure not to make one of them. He always preserved his authority entire amongst the unruly youth, and would quickly compose their disorders and tumults, and yet gain their love and esteem; and knew well how to entertain them with freedom and kindness, and yet oblige them to that respect that becomes a scholar towards his master. So far was he from designing his own private gain, that when a tumult had arisen among the unruly youth, in which there were some under his care who could easily have purchased their pardon by the payment of an inconsiderable mulct, and the assurance of their good behaviour afterwards: and when such was their perverseness that they would not do it, though his paying it in their name would have finished the business; yet, rather than do

such a seemingly unworthy act, which might prostitute authority, and encourage them to like tumultuous practices, he suffered them to be expelled, to his own considerable detriment, as to his worldly interests, having but a few left behind. He was careful to instruct the youth in the most intelligible and useful principles of human knowledge. And it deserves to be remembered, that he was the first in this corner of the land (perhaps in the whole nation) who taught the youth that philosophy, which is now the universal preference by all the knowing world. He looked upon it as the most proper for framing their judgments, and disposing them to conceive things aright; for taking them off from a disputing humour, and a vanity in hard words and distinctions, and in thinking they knew something, when they knew nothing. He thought it served to enlarge and raise their apprehensions of Almighty God, by considering the vastness of his works, and the admirable wisdom and goodness that appeared in the order of the world, and the wonderful contrivance even of the most minute creature; that it disposed them to consider the nature and worth of their immortal souls, and of what small moment all the sensual pleasures of this lower world were; and that it inclined them to a more universal love and good-will towards all, and to meaner thoughts of themselves and their knowledge. He was very careful to train them up in the best and most useful principles of morality, and to guard them against the debauched sentiments of Leviathan. And as he thus made human learning serviceable to the ends of piety and religion, so he made it his great endeavour to have their minds inspired with this. On the Lord's day, in the evening, he usually had some pious discourses with them, laying open the folly and heinousness of vice and impiety, and the excellency and advantage of religion and goodness; and such other considerations as might both instruct their minds, and gain upon their tempers. And he failed not to deal with each of them apart in private. Those who were of bad inclinations, he studied to reform and amend; and in whom he saw any appearance of good-

ness, he was careful to encourage and cherish them. Thus he hath made appear, by his practice, that philosophy and religion are not enemies to one another; but that the sober and discreet use of our reason makes us more capable of the truths and graces of our religion.

But God had designed him for the more immediate service of his church, unto which he had been devoted from the womb. And therefore, by the counsel of some serious and reverend persons in the church, whose advices were of great weight with him, he was called forth to preach the gospel, and a little while after entered into holy orders, and was employed, as you know in the office of the ministry, in the country; where, though his stay was so short, yet the proofs that he gave both of his fitness for, and zeal in, that holy function, were singular. He found he had now more obligations lying on him for piety and innocence of life: and, as the ambassador of his blessed master, he must be very tender of his honour, and of persuading those he was sent unto, to be reconciled to God: and therefore he was careful to shun even all appearances of evil. He studied, during his short stay, by catechising, to instruct his people, with the greatest plainness and affection, in the right sense and knowledge of religion and their duty; and to show them the folly and unreasonableness of those shifts and pretences whereby they encouraged themselves in a bad life. He endeavoured to understand their tempers, and accordingly to apply himself to them. He was deeply sensible of the little sense of religion that generally appeared: and when he saw any spark of goodness, how strangely was he cheered with it! He more valued the humble innocence, and cheerful contentment and resignation of one poor woman in that place, than all the more goodly appearances of others, having oft in his mouth, *Indocti cælum rapiunt;* He endeavoured to bring them to a devout and constant attendance on the public worship; where he always went, and joined with them at the beginning of it; thinking it very unfit, that the invocation of Almighty God,

the reading of some portions of the Holy Scriptures, making a confession of our Christian faith, and rehearsing the ten commandments, should be looked upon only as a preludium for ushering in the people to the church, and the minister to the pulpit. His sermons were always devout and serious, and seasonable; and he endeavoured to fit them to the capacities of the people: and he revived the use of the lectures, looking on it as the most edifying way, to have (as a great light of this nation used to say) long texts and short sermons.

But I must not so slightly pass over his preaching, in which we are all so much concerned. A wise man hath lately written an essay, how to make a good use of bad sermons: and it were to be wished we were instructed in making good ones, such I mean, as might have an influence on men's hearts and lives. And sure I think all that heard him will acknowledge his practice to be no contemptible pattern. He thought it should be a minister's care to choose seasonable and useful subjects, such as might instruct the people's minds, and better their lives; not to entertain them with debates, and strifes of words; that he should express himself in the most plain and affectionate manner; not in airy and fanciful words, nor in words too big with sense, and having a great many thoughts crowded together, which the people's understanding cannot reach; nor in philosophical terms and expressions, which are not familiar to vulgar understanding; nor in making use of an unusual word, where there could be found one more plain and ordinary to express the thought as fully. He looked upon it as a most useful help for composing sermons, to make the Sunday's sermon the subject of our meditation and mental prayer for the foregoing week, that it may thereby sink deep into our spirits, and affect our own hearts, which would make us more capable of teaching others. He thought it a fit expedient for composing us to a serious and affectionate preaching, to propose to ourselves, in the meditation of it, purely the glory of God, and the good of men's souls, and to have this always in our eye; and, in our preaching, to make frequent

collections of the divine presence, and short ejaculations towards heaven; thereby to preserve us in that humble temper, that seriousness and gravity, that becomes us in the presence of God, and as the ambassadors of Christ. And how conformable was his practice to these rules! The matter of his discourses was always so useful and seasonable; his words and expressions so plain, and proper, and well chosen; his deportment so grave and unaffected, becoming the sense of whose ambassador he was; his manner of utterance so affectionate, and expressive of the passionate love and concern he had for men's souls, accompanied with such an act of sweetness and mildness, as charmed men's spirits. And all was so full of light and heat, that I think I may say, in the words of the disciples concerning our blessed Saviour: Did not our hearts burn within us, while he opened unto us the Scriptures? How did the Holy Spirit, by him, enlighten our minds, and affect our hearts? There are some kinds of words and expressions some tones and ways of utterance, which will raise the passions and affections of predisposed tempers, without at all enlightening their minds,—even as music does. And there are others capable of laying open the nature and reason of things, but in so dry a manner, that they float merely upon our understanding as matter of speculation and talk, and do not sink into our hearts. And though there be much noise, now-a-days, about the methods of preaching, and the preferences of one to another; yet it is in this, I am afraid, that we lose ourselves on both sides. But in this, sure, I may appeal to all that heard him, whether his discourses, and his manner of uttering them, did not serve at once both to enlighten their minds, and warm their hearts? And so tender was he of the honour and reputation due to the preaching of the gospel, that as he was careful, on the one hand, to express himself in the most plain, intelligible, and affectionate words; so, also, on the other, to avoid all childish metaphors, apish gestures, jest, and big words, and other such indecencies as did not become the gravity of the function, and were apt to occasion the smiles and laughter of the profane,

rather than the piety of the serious. And I dare say, the most profane scoffers of the nation were never tempted to turn his expressions or gestures into ridicule. Nay, many of avowedly profligate lives, have been extremely affected by his sermons, which pricked them to their hearts, he laid them so open to themselves, and made them so sensible of their brutishness and danger, as they themselves have acknowledged.

I cannot here omit the deep sense he had of true eloquence, and his high value for it; professing he would exchange for it all the other human learning he was master of. He was sensible of the little knowledge he had in the *ars voluntatis;* how little we understood of the nature of men's passions and inclinations, and what things were most capable of bending their wills, and prevailing upon their minds, according to their different tempers. And accordingly he judged there were two essential defects in our best kind of eloquence. The one was, that in the meditating our discourses, we rather merely considered the issues of our reason, and the nature of the things we were thinking of, and did not so much reflect upon the temper of the persons we were to speak to, and what kind of reasoning, words and expressions, would make the best impression upon their minds; and therefore it was nothing strange, that words let fly at random touched them so little. The other, that our hearts were not thoroughly endued with those dispositions we would work on others by our words; and therefore it was no wonder all we said made so little impression on them.

But I come now to the last stage and period of his life, wherein it most eminently appeared that to him to live was Christ. God had designed him for a more universal use and service in his church; and therefore, by the wise providence of the Almighty, he is removed from a private charge in the country, to a more general one, of training up the youth for the holy ministry, and the care of men's souls. Promotions of this nature, especially when they are made by the votes of many, are usually attended with little factions, combinations, and

heats; but, as the purchase was none of his design, so, the general sense of his worth and goodness gave him the unanimous voice of the clergy of this diocese, (who promote to that station,) and the universal approbation of all that knew him: and the apprehension he had of the weight and importance of that office, and his mean thought of himself, made him deliberate about it till their next meeting. Indeed, both his natural, acquired, and moral endowments, made him be judged by all, worthy of this charge. His memory was singular; and though he loved more to study things than words, yet, for instance, in a few days time, he learned to understand one of our Western languages, and could read it, in English, with more readiness than those who had lived many years where it is spoken. As to things of importance, he could soon give them a lasting impression on his mind; though, at length, he gave over the committing public discourses to his memory, professing, when he went about it, he was ashamed to see himself at such a childish exercise. His understanding was ready, clear, and piercing; and he would quickly see through things in civil affairs, as well as in matters of learning. He did not so much read books, as think them: and, by a transient view, would quickly comprehend the design and marrow of them. He had not spent his whole time in reading, being sensible that it often served to dull, confuse, and prejudicate men's understandings, and make them of imperious and dictating tempers: and therefore he made a prudent mixture, of a moderate reading, a choice of useful books, and consulting the living, as well as the dead, having a singular art of benefiting both himself and others, by conversation and discourse; and he digested and improved all, by retired meditations and fervent devotion: so that his learning seemed rather the issues of his mind, and the inspiration of the Almighty, which teacheth knowledge. He employed two summers in going to a neighbouring nation, in which he made it his business to converse with those who were of greatest reputation for learning and goodness; where, as he gained their singular esteem and

good thoughts, so by useful conversation, and a serious observation of tempers and things, he improved his mind in knowledge. But, indeed, we may look upon his excellent endowments as the reward of the pious dispositions of his soul, and of the good designs he proposed to himself in all his studies and endeavours. And God knows, in the undertaking this office, there was nothing he had more before his eyes, than the service of Jesus Christ, and the good of his church. He was deeply sensible of the great weight and importance of the holy ministry, and did much bewail the general failing in the exercise of it; how every man minded his own things, and not the things of Jesus Christ. And therefore he made this the one great design of all his endeavours in that charge, the fitting and training up the youth for that holy function; and this was the great aim both of his public and private care of them.

He considered that they ought chiefly to mind and fit themselves now, for that which would be their great business when they were entered into the holy function; and that this would not be so much the managing of controversies and debates of religion, as the guiding men's souls to eternity; the rescuing the vicious from their sins and vices, and prevailing upon them, by all prudent methods; and directing the serious to the true practice and exercise of religion, and the most proper means for the practice of goodness, and the avoiding and resisting of temptations, and how they ought to behave themselves in all circumstances of life. He thought it sufficient that they understood the state and importance of those controversies and differences which were the grounds of the divisions of Christendom, for their own instruction, and those who stood in need of it, under their care; but the other he looked upon as their main business. And therefore, accordingly, after he had guarded them against the common artifices of the Roman missionaries, in their making proselytes, and cleared the most important difficulties in the gospels, he proposed two designs as the subject of all his public exercises: the one, *de cura pastorali*, proposing to consid-

er the institution and dignity, the weight and difficulty, the necessity and usefulness, of the holy function of the ministry; the nature of that call we ought to have to it, the necessary dispositions that are required to fit us for it, the manner of our own private life and conversation in it, and how we ought to discharge the several exercises of it, both public and private. The other, the instructing them in casuistical divinity; the considering how a man of a strait conscience ought to behave himself, in whatever state or condition of life he be, and whatever cases and circumstances he fall into; and the branching out this into particulars, and vindicating it from the corruption of the Jesuits, and others. So great and good were the designs he proposed unto himself. As to matters of controversy, he studied rather to lessen than multiply; and saw that men were apter to be reasoned out of their erroneous persuasions by a good life, than many arguments. He thought it enough to make the youth understand the true state of matters in debate, and to consider the most weighty differences: but he was careful to take them off, as much as possible, from the disputing humour, and an itch of wrangling, *pro* and *con* about any thing; and many times, by silence, answering their impertinent quibbles. There were no debates he was more cautious to meddle with than those about the decrees of God; being sensible how much Christianity had suffered by men's diving into things beyond their reach; secret things belonging to the Lord, and things revealed to us and our children. But he had always a deep sense of the powerful efficacy of God's grace upon our souls; and that all our good was entirely to be ascribed to God, and all our evil to ourselves. He used, once a year, (when the youth were most frequent,) by a very serious and affectionate discourse in English, to lay before them the weight and importance of the ministry; how they should demean themselves now, while they were candidates for that holy function; how carefully they ought to avoid all such evil conversation as might give their minds a bad tincture; what course of study they ought to take; inviting

them to a private resort unto him, and expressing a most affectionate concern for them.

It was also his great care, to make his private conversation with them as useful as his public. And by this, indeed, he hoped to do most good. They had always free access to him; and his counsels and advices were still suited to the dispositions he perceived in them. He could so modestly and prudently tell them their failings, as to make them perceive and amend them without being offended. He was careful to lend, and direct them to the use of, good books, and, indeed, one of the great ends of his buying so many, was to serve them. Those who were of the most eminent endowments, and best inclinations, he stirred up to serious thoughts of the holy ministry. He gave them the most undoubted proofs of his love and care of them, opened his heart freely to them, and learned their inclinations and studies. He directed them to the best means of bettering their hearts, as well as informing their judgments; prayer, meditation, and frequent retirements: and made them sensible, that self-will was the root of all our sins; and an entire resignation to the will of God, the very spring of all our duty; and directed them to frequent and constant acts of self-denial and resignation. And as he was thus careful to his charge, so also of maintaining that entire correspondence with, and due deference and respect that he owed towards his reverend colleague: and that entire and constant love and harmony between them, and that mutual deserved esteem they had for one another, was very singular and very exemplary.

Thus, to him to live was Christ. Thus faithfully and prudently did our dear friend manage his charge in serving the interest of his blessed master. And we might have hoped confidently, ere long, that by their joint endeavors, through the blessing of the Almighty, we should have seen another face on our church. But, amidst all his pious designs and cares, he is called by his great master, in an hour that we thought not of, from his stewardship here, to an higher employment in the other

world. Who is that faithful and wise steward, whom his Lord makes ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing; of a truth he will make him ruler over all that he hath.

Indeed, the end of his life was no less Christ's, than the beginning and whole course of it. The time of his sickness was as cheerfully spent in suffering the will of God, as the former was in doing it. He manifested the greatest meekness and cheerfulness of spirit throughout the whole course of it. He used not the least harsh expression, either to any of those that waited upon him, or concerning the present providence. He expressed a perfect indifferency as to life and death, and an entire resignation to the will of God, to dispose of him as he thought meet. He found himself never more sensible of the vanity of this world, nor ever felt more ardent acts of love to God, than at that time. He was rapt in admiration of God's goodness to him, and the little returns he said he had made to it; and acknowledged his own great unworthiness, and his humble confidence in the mercy and goodness of God, through the merits of his blessed Saviour. And thus meekly did he pass his sickness, and resign his spirit, without any trouble from the world, or great pain of body, or any anguish of mind: for, mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; for the end of that man is peace.

And now, after all, I cannot here omit what service he hath done the world, by permitting it to enjoy those excellent thoughts of his about the life of God in the soul of man. Men may write big volumes, and, as one says, talk much and say nothing; but it is a great matter to talk little, and yet say much. And, sure, whoever considers the importance of the matter of that book, the clear representation of the life and spirit of true religion and its graces, with the great excellency and advantages of it, the proposal of the most effectual means for attaining to it by the grace of God, the piety and seasonableness of the devotions, together with the nat-

ural and affectionate eloquence of the style,— cannot but be sensible of its great usefulness to inspire us with the spirit of true religion, to enlighten our minds with a right sense and knowledge of it, to warm our hearts with suitable affections and breathings after it, and to direct our lives to the practice of it. And, indeed, it seems to have been, in a great measure, the transcript of his own life and spirit. Those divine graces and virtues which he so clearly describes, shined forth in his own life and conversation; and he not only understood, but felt them. That faith, and love, and charity, that purity and humility, which he so passionately recommends and speaks of, did eminently appear throughout the whole course of his life.

What a deep sense had he of the truths of our religion! He suffered them not to float on his understanding, to be matter of talk and dispute with others; but he let them sink deep into his spirit, to renew his soul, and direct his life, and was careful to make use of all means that might give him a deeper sense of them. What a deep sense had he of the goodness of God; the wonderful mercy of our redemption by Jesus Christ; the corruption, the degeneracy, and sinfulness of our nature, the excellency of goodness, and the happiness of heaven? And his deep sense of all this, was the spring and root of all his other graces.

In how manifold instances did appear the ardency of his love to God? He was still breathing with more ardent desires after him, and was sorry he could love him no more. He was frequently admiring his wisdom and goodness in the government of the world, and the wise disposal of things. It was not the mean principles of custom, reputation or vain-glory, or a servile fear, that made him carefully avoid all evil in his practices, but the ardency of his love to his heavenly Father; and therefore his life was so uniform and constant to itself, and carefully employed in doing all the good he could, and any thing whereby God might be glorified: and he was still sensible how little he could do worthy of his love. His own inclinations were correspondent to the

resolutions of his pious father, from his childhood; and he had devoted himself for the service of Jesus Christ in the ministry. Those in whom he observed virtuous endowments, and the most pious inclinations, he encouraged, by all means, to the service of God in the holy function. He endeavoured, always, after an absolute resignation of his will to him, looking upon this as the very life of all graces. He was very observing of the various passages of his providence towards him, and very sensible of his goodness in crossing some designs which he afterwards saw would have been inconvenient for him. He was careful to observe all the steps of Providence; and, when they seemed not to approve of his intentions, how eager soever his desires had been, he was sure not to go one step farther. He was ardent and constant in his devotion towards God. His piety and zeal was very eminent in the public worship, when he was the mouth of the people; his devotion was so raised, and the humble fervour and seriousness of his spirit so visible, as did highly inflame the devotion of the serious: and, when he made one of them, the humility and adoration of his soul did appear in his outward behaviour; and he thought it one suitable expression of it, to bow the knee before that Majesty before whom the angels tremble. In the celebration and receiving of the Holy Communion, his soul seemed to be wholly swallowed up in the contemplation of Jesus Christ; and his devotions were the admiration of all that saw him. He had been constant in his private prayers to God from his childhood; and that great secret of devotion which he recommends in his book, was his frequent practice: and he sent up, sometimes, such aspirations of love, with such ardent sighs and groanings, and heavings of his spirit, as, perhaps, unclogged his spirit, and made his soul take its flight so soon from this earthly tabernacle.

And, sure, a soul so much inflamed with the love of God, could not be wanting in a suitable charity towards men: and, indeed, to this his very natural temper seemed to incline him. There was nothing of harshness in

the disposition of his spirit; but it was full of sweetness and love, which appeared in his very air and countenance, and was apt to attract men's hearts at the first sight; and this happy disposition was hallowed and raised, by the love of God, into a holy charity. His soul was as wide as the world, and his love and good will were universal, and every man the object of them. His prayers and good wishes were extended to all men; and all the harm he could do his enemies, (if there were any such universal haters of mankind as to do him bad offices,) was, to pray for them the more earnestly to God. He did not confine his charity within a sect or party, but loved goodness wherever he found it; and entertained no harsh thoughts of men, merely upon their differing from him in this or that opinion. He was grieved at the distractions and divisions of the church; and that religion, the bond of love, should be made so much the bone of contention.

What prudent methods would his sincere love and charity to others prompt him to, to undeceive them in their errors? How meekly would he discourse with them about their differences? calmly showing the small importance of some things, not worth the contending for, and making appear the bad influence that other things had, as to holiness and a good life; and yielding in others, again, that were not contrary to the designs of religion; making them sensible of the sincerity of his soul, and his hearty good-will to them. He was far from maintaining a difference upon the account of stoutness of humour, or keeping up the reputation of a sect or party, being desirous we should all be united in the general religion of Jesus Christ, and studying to make friends, and unite the hearts of those who had been divided by names and parties: and thus, if at first he did not prevail over men's prejudices, yet he failed not to gain their hearts; and so, by degrees, made way for his seasonable discourses. And O what holy charms and pious arts had he to catch men's souls, and to make them pursue their own happiness! A charity which he thought far superior to any that could be done for the body,

(though he was eminent in that kind also,) and of which he would speak with the greatest concern and emotion of spirit. How many arts had he to better them, and make them good and happy? His love made him always as intent upon this, as the love of money will make the covetous man bend all his thoughts and designs to add to his treasure. How would he take advantage, from every thing, to make all things work together for their good? He seemed to be the visible spring that put all good designs in motion, for bettering the state of our church. He was the genius that put life and spirit into the serious studies and pious endeavours of those he conversed with. How careful was he to propagate, every where, right apprehensions of religion? and what a visible influence had he among us in this matter? What wise methods had he to make his friends sensible of their infirmities and failings, by speaking to them of his own? and to stir them up to zeal and diligence in piety in good works, and to the use of the most effectual means of purifying their souls, by telling them instances of the piety and lives of others of his acquaintances? He was careful even to make his ordinary conversation useful for this end, both in giving the example of an unaffected modesty and meekness, and dropping in always something that might make them more in love with religion and goodness. The effects of his love and care of men's souls extended even to those who knew him not; and he obliged always his friends and acquaintances, as there was occasion, to employ the interest of their friendship and familiarity with others, in persuading them to piety and a good life; and alluring them to the reading of good books, and such other means as might serve both to enlighten and purify them: and when he heard of the good fruits of such designs, how much would he be cheered with it? His love and veneration for good men was singular and extraordinary; nothing he more delighted in, than their pious conversation: and he could so well represent their piety and good life to others, as to make them enamoured with it too.

His love and charity were eminent, also, in the

bounty of his alms, and the relief of the outward necessities of others. The first money he gained being at the University, he was careful to lay by a portion of it for the poor, before he made any use of it for himself; devoting, as it were, the first fruits unto God. And this course he observed throughout the rest of his life, laying aside, always, a portion of his income for the relief of the necessitous. This has been the practice of many charitable persons, as the best method to secure a stock for charity; to make them give it with a liberal and willing mind, and seek out fit objects for it. Were this practice more frequently observed, it would undoubtedly make Christians more bountiful, and their charity and alms more profitable to themselves and others: and a tenth thus cheerfully bestowed, accompanied with the other exercises of a pious life, would, undoubtedly, bring in its hundred-fold of blessings in this world, and in the world to come life everlasting: and, as he was careful thus to provide for charity and alms, so, also, to dispose of it aright. He did not his alms to be seen of men: many were relieved by his bounty, who knew nothing of it. He chose out some fit persons, both in the city and the country, who were acquainted with the necessities and straits of poor, modest, honest house-keepers, to whom he frequently gave money to relieve their wants. And these were sometimes honest persons of different persuasions, who were relieved in their straits they knew not by whom. A noble example of Christian charity! Blessed be God, there are yet some sparks of it in the world. God grant such pious examples may encourage and stir up more to a Christian imitation of them. Nor was his charity so exemplary only in the liberal dispensing of portions of his yearly incomes, but, also, in such a prudent disposition of what the wisdom of Providence, and his pious father's care had provided for him in his last will and testament, as might most tend to the public good and advantage; as will in due time appear.

But, among the other expressions of his love, his friendship, sure, deserves a grateful remembrance.—

Friendship, the flower of society, the ease of our griefs, the heightener and refiner of our joys, our guide and counsellor, and the life of angels! Many have made fine pictures of it; but the want of true friendship has been generally the observation and complaint of all men. But O! how eminent an example was he, of sincere and hearty friendship? This was the darling of his soul, and the delight of his spirit. He did not act it to serve little designs, and private interests; but he was full of cordial love and affection, even like the love of Jonathan. How freely would he open his heart, and unbosom his thoughts, and give faithful counsel to his friend! How dear were his interests to him, and how wisely would he manage them! If there was any worldly thing that was apt to create grief and trouble to him, it was the disasters, or bad success that befell them: and their happy events, would so refresh and cheer his spirits, that, as has been taken notice of, it had even influence on his sickly body, and would give it some greater measure of health. How readily would he forego his own interests to oblige his friend; and deny himself, as is well known to some, even in those designs and inclinations for which, usually, we have a great concern, when we are once engaged in them? So far was he from desiring to engross the love and kindness of his friends, that he made it his business and delight to propagate true friendship, and make them friends to one another: and in this he studied to render it the most useful thing in the world, and to make it serve the great ends of piety and religion. Those in whom he observed the spirit of true piety and goodness, or any appearance and likelihood of the one having influence on, and bettering the other's life and practice, he endeavoured to bring them into acquaintance and familiarity; to endear them to each other, and make their friendship useful for promoting true piety and goodness, both in themselves and others: and this, perhaps, is the most effectual means for recovering something of the ancient Christian spirit in the world. Many methods have been set on foot, under pretence of effectuating this design. In the Greek

and Roman churches, men have formed new societies, instituted new orders, engaged them to peculiar vows, and given them particular religions, as they call them, subordinate to the general religion of Jesus Christ. And among those whom the gross corruptions and tyranny of the Roman Church, both in faith and worship, have thrust from their communion, many have groundlessly separated from one another, and formed distinct sects and parties. But how little either of these have contributed to the promoting of true piety and goodness, experience may make the world sensible. The designs of the former have ended in raising the splendour and revenues each of their peculiar order, in magnifying its rules in opposition to others, in observing their particular institutions, which become matter of mere formality and custom; having a show of humility and will-worship, but do not tend to the purifying of the conscience: and the rest of the people are apt to think they have not such obligations to piety and a good life, as if the care of that were only incumbent on those who had peculiarly assumed to themselves the title of religious. And the zeal and endeavours of the latter are usually spent in keeping up the reputation of their sect and party, in those things especially wherein they differ from others; and this ordinarily makes the studies and designs on all sides to run into this channel. But perhaps, if, instead of such groundless divisions and schisms, and pretence of bettering the state of religion, more care were had to entertain and propagate a holy and sincere friendship, we might see more blessed fruits of it; whilst, by the friendly communications of the serious, their sentiments about religion would be mutually cleared, their minds united, and they instructed in the best means of purifying their hearts, inflamed with one another's zeal, and stirred up to spread the same temper among others, as far as their influences could reach. Such an holy combination (not to observe the vows of any particular order, or to divide from the rest of the world, but) to follow Jesus; to live according to his holy religion, and to persuade others who profess it to a sincere conformity thereunto; O! how de-

sirable were it! It was thus, methinks, that the Son of God did at first spread his religion in the world: it was thus that the zeal and piety of his first followers did continue it; and it is thus that we must expect to see the life and spirit of it to breathe once again amongst us.

And now I need not speak much of the purity and cleanness of his heart, and his great unconcernedness for this present world, it having been the general observation of all that knew him. He looked, indeed, always as a stranger and pilgrim in it; and was dead to it in heart and spirit long before his body had taken leave of it. Good God! what a deep sense had he of the meanness and vanity of this world's hurry and designs, which he used to say looked to him like the projects and scuffle of children and fools? In his very youth his heart was clear of any inclination to it; and he would even then say to his intimates, that, abstracting from the will of God, mere curiosity would make him long for another world, it being a tedious thing to see still the same dull play acted over again here. What little regard had he to the getting or keeping of what the world calls wealth and riches? Never was he seen to have any project that tended that way. He could scarce expend any thoughts about his yearly incomes, but remitted still the care of that to others, without calling them to an account. How excellently had he learned his master's lesson. To take no thought what he should eat, what he should drink, or wherewithal he should be clothed! Never any thing he was more unconcerned in than this. Whatever was set before him, for the sustentation of his body, he did eat of it, asking no questions for appetite's sake. His thoughts and his spirit were never taken up with those actions of the animal life, even when he was about them; and, while he supported nature, he scarce suffered his taste to have any complacency in them. He thought it strange to see those who pretended to a Christian temperance, exercise such voluptuous pleasure in their meats, making them the subject of their table-talk, and, as if they owned their bellies for their gods, and pro-

feasing they loved such and such dishes with all their souls. Alas! that the weakness and infirmity of human nature, by which we are levelled with the beasts, should become the matter of our vanity and voluptuousness, instead of that humble and abasing sense we ought to have of ourselves.

The innocence and purity of his life was observable from his very childhood. He was never tinctured with the least appearances of those impurities which are the reproach of the Christian world. How great an example was he of Christian continence and celibacy to all that knew him? His very air and conversation showed how much he was mortified to the world in this respect. He had no small abhorrence of all discourses and actions that savoured any thing of impurity; and could not endure the obscene wit of those who were apt to wrest the talk of men's ordinary discourse that way.

As the pleasures and pomp of the world could never bewitch, so the hardships and troubles of it did never oppress and overcome his spirit; but, in all conditions, his mind seemed always equal and constant to itself. When he lived in the country, the hardships and inconveniences he then endured, were the common talk of all that knew him: his coarse fare, and hard lodging, and unwonted solitude, the extreme coldness of the season, and the comfortless shelters he had against it, did excite the compassion of others, but never lessened the quiet and contentedness of his spirit; and he suffered them with as much patience as if he had been bred up from his infancy in the Turkish galleys. Any traverses that befell him in the circumstances of his life and designs, did never becloud the natural serenity and cheerfulness of his mind: and he used to say in relation to such discontents, that as he blessed God he was not naturally melancholy, so he thought an acquired melancholy was scandalous in a clergyman.

And O what a profound humility of soul did shine forth in his life and actions! The admiration of the perfections of the Almighty, in the contemplation of which he was often taken up, had sunk him into truly mean thoughts of himself. All who had occasion to

converse with him, were sensible of the lowliness of his mind; and yet he scarce ever observed those little officious ceremonies or compliments, which we must oftimes make use of to cover or counteract the pride of our spirits, or which it prompts us to traffic with, to purchase the regard and esteem of others. He disdained not to converse with the meanest; and looked upon every man as his fellow and companion. And the exemplary regard he had to young children, was equally the expression of his humility and his love. How ready was he, on all occasions, to converse with them, taking a singular delight in their harmless innocence, and usually, after the example of the great master of love, affectionately embracing and blessing them? And such was the pious meekness of his soul towards others, that if at any time his natural temper raised any little commotion in his spirit, (which was scarce ever taken notice of after his entering into the holy function,) yet he quickly appeased it, and never suffered the sun to go down upon his wrath. He was never seen to boast of any of his performances, nor yet to use the finer and more subtle fetch of vain-glory, in an elaborate undervaluing of them, that others might commend them. But the expressions of his mean thoughts of himself, were always so natural, and so full of simplicity, that one might easily observe them to arise from the bottom of his soul: and all his actions, and his conversation, made appear the truth and sincerity of them. Though his piety and innocence were eminent in the eyes of all that knew him, yet he had no small sense of his own unworthiness, when he set himself in the light of God's countenance, beheld his purity, and thought on his infinite goodness and mercy to him in Jesus Christ, (about which his thoughts were frequently taken up.) O how deeply was he humbled under the sense of his sinfulness and ingratitude, and the little returns he had made to such undeserved goodness! When we are in a total darkness, we cannot discern one thing from another; and an ordinary light will discover to us the grosser lineaments, and more remarkable differences of things: but some beams darted in from the sun will show us

much impurity and foulness, where we thought all to have been pure and clean. And O with what seriousness and simplicity did this enlightened soul express the sense he had of the sinfulness of his nature, and the worthlessness of his person! Almost the very last words he spoke were to this purpose, uttered with an extraordinary devotion of spirit. After having witnessed his resignation to the will of God, and his humble hopes in his mercy and goodness: But, says he, when you have the charity to remember me in your prayers, do not think me a better man than I am; but look upon me as indeed I am, a sinner. A most miserable sinner! O if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the wicked and ungodly appear!

But I forbear to mention any farther the graces and virtues which shined forth in the life and spirit of our friend. The experience which many of you have had of them in his conversation, will furnish you with a better sense of them than all I can say. As to the particular instances I have given, there are more than one or two here present who can bear witness to the truth of them: and I hope there are none here that will think me guilty of so much impudence, as to utter falsehoods of him in a place where he was so well known, and where there are so many so well acquainted with most of the important and private passages of his life. No: I know you are sensible how far short all I have said comes of his true worth. He had need be endued with the same spirit, that would speak aright of him; and true goodness cannot be expressed, but felt.

Give me leave only to join in with your meditations, and to think with you on the lessons we may learn from the present dispensation, according to our different relations and circumstances.

And now, good people, let us consider his example, and our early loss of him. O that we would once learn to be wise, and to live like Christians! You are all sensible what an eminent example he hath given us; and, alas! what hinders that we should not be followers of him, even as he also was of Christ? How may we see in him all our little pretences and prejudices against

piety and goodness dashed and confounded? Where is the man that will say, he tastes as much solid pleasure in his jollity and cups; that his lusts and vices create in him as great a serenity of mind, afford him as much comfort, dispose him to as much patience and contentedness in any condition, as were always seen to be the reward and blessing of the innocence and goodness of his life? When did ever such universal esteem and love wait upon a bad man to his grave, as we see hath accompanied the piety and virtue of one who was ambitious of nothing less than the glory of men; while yet all mouths are opened in his praise, every man speaks good of him, and persons of all sects and persuasions amongst us, lament his loss, and bedew his hearse with tears? O how peaceful and resigned do we see the death of the righteous! and how unlike must ours be to it, if we will not live their life! What an uniformity is there in the virtue and innocence of that life that springs from true goodness, and the love of God? And O how void must we be of it, how palpable our hypocrisy, if our actions contradict one the other; if we bless God, and yet curse and do evil to our neighbour; if we confess and beg pardon for our sins, and yet breathe and meditate revenge against others; and if we have not a respect to all his commandments! If we must needs look upon the saints and holy men of God, in old time, as if they had been creatures of another nature, and consider their example as disproportioned to our condition; yet here we have seen one conversing amongst us, like unto ourselves, subject to the same passions, temptations, and infirmities, and yet conquering all these, through Christ that strengthened him: and why should we turn off all serious thoughts to old age, as if we were then only fit for God, when we were fit for nothing else! May not the piety and innocence of his youth, shame us into a better mind, and more Christian lives? For honourable age is not that which standeth in length of time, nor that is measured by length of years. But wisdom is the gray hair unto men, and an unspotted life is old age. Thus the righteous that is dead, shall condemn the ungodly which are

living: and youth that is soon perfected, the many years and old age of the unrighteous.

And O what shall we say of that divine Providence, which has taken this light from among us? The ways of the Lord are wonderful, and his judgments are made a great deep. One who was so great an example of piety, an ornament to his country and the church, is quickly removed from us in his youth; and many who are a reproach to religion, the scandal of the world, and the shame of human nature, are left to old age; whether to fill up the measure of their sins, or to lead them to repentance, God knows. He whom God had blessed with so much light to instruct us, and virtue and zeal to direct us; who was so helpful to enlighten us by his sermons and discourses, and to edify us by his example, is suddenly snatched away from us. O that we may hear the rod, and him who hath appointed it! When we make no use of God's talents, (such are the instructions, and counsel, and example of good men,) he takes them from us. Alas! what an ill account can we render of this? Could we almost imagine sermons more serious, affectionate, and heavenly; and yet wherein have we been prevailed with to better our lives, to forego one vice we were otherwise inclined to, or to do that good we were averse to? All the use we make of his example is, to seem to approve and commend it; but wherein do we imitate it? Do we think that other helps would do better, that other means and circumstances would have more influence on our lives? Alas! my brethren, they that will not hear Moses and the prophets, neither would they be persuaded though one should rise from the dead. But we are usually most sensible of the worth of worldly blessings; and most thankful for them, when God takes them from us: and O that our appetite may be thus at least quickened for spiritual blessings! O that our present loss may have this influence upon us, that we may be truly sensible of God's goodness in bestowing this blessing so long upon us; that we may adore his providence in depriving us of it; and that the impressions he hath left on our minds of his life and spirit, and the seed of

the gospel he hath sown in our hearts, may, by God's grace, yet bring forth fruit in us. Finally, my brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, &c. Those things which ye have both learned and received, and heard and seen in him, do; and the God of peace shall be with you.

And you, my friends, who were his more peculiar care, his children, of whom he travailed in birth till Christ should be formed in you, whom he was so solicitous to have fitted for the service of Jesus, and the care of souls; alas! who can blame your tears, or withhold your grief? My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof. It is not possible for me to express the blessing you had in him: I know your own hearts are sensible of it, beyond all I can say. O what a useful guide and director was he! How dear were you unto him! How unaffectedly humble and ingenuous in his conversation! How wise and pious were his instructions and advices! How much were his thoughts taken up about you, making them all serve for his great design of fitting you for the holy function! And how great and unspeakable is your loss! O let us adore, and submit to the divine providence! Search and try your hearts, and consider your ways, and reckon what fruit you have brought forth worthy of such a blessing; and whether you have not deserved the removal of that light, while you have been so little careful to be enlightened by his instructions, or warmed by his piety and zeal. God withdraws from us such useful blessings, to stir us up to shake off our sloth, and a more ardent care and endeavour for the enlightening of our minds, and the purifying of our hearts, for which his life and spirit would have been so useful to us. If you would let the world see what esteem you had for him, if you would not be guilty of the abuse and misimprovement of one of the greatest blessings you ever had, remember his instructions, follow his advices, and study to be what of all the world he was most desirous you should be: make it appear, that his labour is not in vain. You have known his doctrine, manner of

life, purpose, faith, long-suffering, charity, and patience. You may remember how he behaved himself among you; what, and how he instructed you. You know how desirous he was, both to have you good men, and well fitted for the holy ministry. Consider how, above all things, he directed you to the purifying of your hearts, and the exercises of true repentance. Think what gravity he required in your behaviour, what modesty and humility in your words and conversation, answerable to your designing such employment; what abstraction from unsuitable business or company. Call to mind the care he had of directing your studies aright; how he diverted you from such learning as was not apt to give you a sense of piety and religion; took you off from an itching curiosity about questions and strifes of words, which minister to vanity and contention; persuaded you to cleanness of heart, truly pious designs, and frequent devotion, as the best dispositions and helps for knowledge: and directed you to such books and studies, as might serve to give you a right and deep sense of Christianity, and of the importance and duties of the holy function. Remember how much he bewailed the unseemly haste, and unfit methods and arts which some used, to thrust themselves into the holy ministry; and admired the different conduct of the holy men in old times, who, sensible of its great weight, and apprehensive of their own insufficiency, were almost always forced to it by the people, and the governors of the church. Consider, I beseech you, of what importance he thought it, both for your own souls, and those which might be your charge, that you should use all prudent means sincerely to examine yourselves before-hand, of your fitness both in heart and spirit for that employment, and the purity of your intentions, designing truly the service of Jesus Christ, and the good of men's souls, and not the sordid ends of vanity, worldly mindedness, or ambition. And O that these things may sink into your hearts! and that you may continue in the things we learned of him, and have been assured of, knowing of whom you have learned them!

And you, whom Providence hath intrusted with the care and education of the youth, pardon me also to call to mind the example of our dear friend, while he made one of your society. You know you have charge of the hopes of the next generation; and that the welfare both of the church and state, and their own good and happiness, doth very much depend upon the right forming of their minds and tempers in their younger years; and that as the making this your great design in that employment, doth most tend to promote it, so you can never more serve your own interests than in it. All callings have their several temptations; and divisions, or sloth, or interest, or ignorance, may be the bane of this. The ill management of it has a more universally bad influence on the world, than that of most other employments, as the happy fruits of the faithful discharge of it doth as far transcend many others. We are all made for eternity; and we cannot go about any thing aright, if our eye be not fixed upon its end, and if all subordinate ends have not a respect to the great end of our being. The holy calling has this for its immediate end and design; and, next to it, yours has the nearest relation to it. We are set apart to declare the light which Jesus Christ has revealed from heaven, by which he brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel; and you, to clear up the remains of the light of nature that is within us; and he that dwells in light inaccessible, is the fountain and author of both. We ought to be careful, that men be not misled by false lights, nor mistake darkness for light, and to persuade them to live by the light of Jesus Christ; and you are to beware, that we do not take the prejudices of childhood, custom, and education, our own or other men's foolish fancies, for clear notions and lights of our understanding. As the bad use of our reason, and the confusion of the light of nature, has made men pervert or disbelieve the light of Jesus Christ; so the sincere and right use of it doth strangely dispose us to receive that light, to admire and love it, and to lead our lives accordingly. True philosophy leads us to acknowledge and adore the author of our being; to admire his infinite perfections, from the vastness,

order, and usefulness of his works; to be sensible of his absolute disposal of all things, and our entire dependence upon him for life, thought, and motion. It shows us the spiritual nature of our immortal souls, and the meanness and vanity of sensual pleasures. It discovers to us the shortness of our reason, and the little ground we have for vanity, either for our knowledge, who know so few and so little of his works, or for what we are or can do, who owe all to him, and bear so mean a proportion to the universe of bodies and spirits. It lets us see, that our only happiness were to have our wills united to his; and shows us, that we should love him above all, and have an universal love for all men; and that all our felicity consists in studying thus heartily the common good of the world. It gives occasion to make us sensible of the strange corruption of our hearts, and how far we are from being what we should be, and how unable we are to give ourselves those dispositions of love, and fear, and reverence, that we owe our Maker. And thus it leads us to the Redeemer of mankind, and makes appear how much need we have of his grace and truth. I doubt not but these, and such-like considerations, do engage you to make this your great view and design, to dispose the youth, both by your instructions and example, to a right sense of religion, and suitable apprehensions of the Maker of the world, and the Redeemer of mankind; without which view, philosophy is altogether vain and impertinent. And you yourselves know how exemplary your friend was in making it useful for this end. His pious and Christian Ethics, his peaceable and devout life, his private instruction and training up of the youth, in order to this design, will be lasting remembrances of it to many ages.

And now, my brethren, what shall we say, or whither shall we turn our thoughts? Alas! our loss is great and unspeakable. How much do we stand in need of such lights and examples! Alas! how weighty is our employment! What prudence and piety does it call for! How dangerous is the neglect, or ill management of it! What need have we of such a monitor to shake off our sloth, and awe, and instruct us by his example! "Parishes are

holy ships," as one says, "whose curates are the pilots, and eternity the port they must guide them to. If it need so much art and so long experience to sail upon the seas, what knowledge and prudence does it call for, to pass over happily the sea of this world, where tempests never cease? Alas! who can think, without sensible grief and bitter tears, that the helm of these vessels, which contain such precious wares as cost no less than the blood of God, should be committed, ordinarily, to men of so little experience; that they are not only ignorant of the tempests, shelves, and banks of this terrible sea, but even have not the strength and industry to guide their own little vessel back to the road? And those inestimable riches are frequently intrusted to those whom they will not trust with a purse of fifteen or twenty pieces. But, even when the pilots are able, who would not at last lose their courage to see themselves sailing amidst so many hazards, and with so little success? How many stupid ones fall out of the vessel! how many imprudent ones get out to sail apart in shallops! how many desperate ones throw themselves over, and abandon themselves to the fury of the waves? What disquiets, what griefs, and what trouble for the poor pilot? He must run on all sides, to reach out his hand to those that fall. He must exhaust his lungs, in trying to call those who flee away. He must even frequently throw himself into the sea, to recover those whom the waves swallow up. If he watch not, the fall of the first will be imputed to him. If he be silent, he will answer for the flight of the second. If he fear labour and travail, he will be accused of the other's despair. If, in a word, he want vigilance, strength, and courage, he will be guilty of as many bloodsheds as he lets souls perish." This is a faint image of our condition. How may these thoughts fill us with astonishment and fear? What a risk do we run, while we are engaged in such a dangerous employment? What piety and prudence, vigilance and courage, does it call for? How strangely does our sloth and negligence infect one another, and lull us into carelessness, till the waves swallow us up? What need have we of some to call

upon us, to mind us of our danger, to make us ashamed of our sloth, and to stir us up by their example? And what a blessing was our friend to us in this respect? how did he inspire life and spirit in all good designs amongst us, and stir us up to our duty, by his public and private care, as far as his influences could reach, and by his example? How well did he answer the character of a good man, and a good clergyman? His innocency was eminent and observable from his childhood, so that he had a good report from them that were without. He had been trained up from a child in the Holy Scriptures; and such instructions as might inspire him with the right knowledge of them, and a deep sense of religion; and which might make him wise unto salvation. As he had been devoted to the holy calling from his infancy, so he was called to it by the authority and hearty approbation of those who are empowered by God, having the inward testimony of a good conscience, and of the purity of his intentions; far from any design of vain-glory or interest. His mind was stored with all sorts of knowledge, without vanity or contention: his piety was eminent and singular, always accompanied with an unaffected humility: his spirit and disposition were ever peaceable: his love to God, and men's souls, made him study the divine art of becoming all things to all men, that he might save some. None was ever more mortified to covetousness or filthy lucre. His charity in almsgivings were exemplary, in all things showing himself a pattern of good works. In his doctrine, he showed uncorruptedness, gravity, and sincerity, sound words that could not be condemned. His discourse was always modest, and his conversation useful. He watched all occasions of doing good to men's souls, and would not let them slip Never man was more apt to teach, being gentle to all men. Those that opposed themselves to the truth, or were overtaken in a fault, he endeavoured to instruct and restore in the spirit of meekness, avoiding foolish questions, and strifes of words. And, by walking in all good conscience before God and man, he hath, among other things, given a singular instance of gaining the love and esteem of all, and of preserving his person and his

office from that contempt which they say is so generally thrown upon our order: so that even scarce any man despised his youth. How may we behold in his life, as in a glass, the virtues and qualities of a true minister of Jesus Christ? What a living instruction was it to us, whereby we might observe our own defects, and be stirred up to our duty? Who can fathom the mysteries of Providence, or tell what judgments may threaten the church by the removal of such a burning and shining light? The righteous man perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart; merciful men are taken away, none considering that it is from the evil to come. O that his life and example may be yet active among us; that we may be actuated by the same spirit, not to mind our own things, but the things of Jesus Christ; that we may have pity on ourselves and this miserable church; that the sense of our lamentable distractions, and the universal corruption of men's lives, may sink deep into our hearts! O that the love of Jesus, and the care of souls, may inspire our hearts, and direct our studies, and enliven our sermons, and increase our vigilance, and guide our lives! Save us, Lord, or else we perish!

And now, my friends, what words or grief can express our loss? you whom nature or choice had more peculiarly endeared to him; you who were honoured with his friendship, and blessed with his conversation; who were guided by his counsel, and comforted by his presence; who was the relish of your joys, and the ease of your griefs: I am distressed for thee, my brother; very pleasant hast thou been unto me. Thy love unto me was wonderful, passing the love of women. But, alas! why do we mourn our private loss, when the loss is so public and universal, and every man concerned in it; while it is not the removal of our candle only, but of a light of the world, and a public good? Every man who knew him, or heard of him, claims a share in our grief, and bewail their particular loss in him. The affectionate father remembers a most dutiful and comfortable son; relations cry out for the loss of their dearest and most useful kinsman; friends bewail their being torn from a friend indeed; the learned bemoan the want of a great

owner and promoter of true knowledge; the youth lament their being deprived of a most pious, wise, affectionate, and useful guide; the poor groan for the loss of a father; the devout find the want of a director and pattern; the church feels herself deprived of one of her purest lights: the clergy are sensible he was to them an ensample and an honour; the people acknowledge they had a blessing of him in his life and doctrine; the whole nation may feel the want of a great promoter of true loyalty, and all Christian virtues and graces, by his example and instructions, and are sensible what an honour he was to them: yea, the several sects among us lament his loss, and seem to confess, that a few like him would soon heal our schisms; and that his pious life, and meek instructions, if any thing, would soon have recovered them from their errors. O how is our loss swallowed up in the public! My father, my father, the chariots of Israel, and the horsemen thereof.

But whither would our passions drive us? Shall we forget the governour of the world, and who is the Lord of life and death? We must not look on his removal from us as a fatal necessity, or a blind stroke of chance and fortune; as the sport of the humours and parts that composed his body. No, no. The author of the universe employs still that power, and wisdom, and goodness, in ruling the world, that he did in making it. In him we live and move, and have our being. His hand is in every thing that befalls us; all that strikes our senses, which we see, or hear, or know, or feel within ourselves, and impute to other instruments, are really the effects of his power, and are ordered by him for great and wise ends. A hair of our head does not fall to the ground without his leave. This that has now befallen us, is an holy indispensable effect of a decree of the providence of God, to be executed in its due time. He had not sent him into this world for a lasting temporal comfort unto us, but for the great and wise ends of his own glory, and of the world that is to come. Let us not look upon this accident in itself, but in God, and in his will. Let us, in humble silence, adore the unsearchable depth of his secrets; acknowledge the holiness of

his decrees; bless the conduct of his providence; and, (according to that singular example which we have seen on this occasion in one of the greatest fatherly affections heightened by all kinds of endearments,) uniting our wills to the will of God, and sacrificing our natural passions unto it, let us walk with him, in him, and for him, and what he hath willed in us, and for us, to all eternity.

And truly, if we look upon our dear friend, and consider what he hath been and what he now is, and shall be to all eternity, it will make us yet the more sensible how much we ought to resign ourselves to, and glorify the will of our heavenly Father in his wise disposal of him. The life of a Christian is a continual sacrifice to God; crucifying our earthly affections, mortifying our sinful passions, and subduing our wills to his; and this sacrifice is finished and perfected by death: and the lives of men, and the accidents that befall them, ought to affect our spirits, according as they break off or advance in sacrificing their hearts and lives to God. How comfortable has his life been to us, and to all good men, in this respect. From the time he was devoted and given unto Jesus Christ in his baptism, how has he been fitted by the grace of the Holy Spirit, to offer up his life a continual sacrifice to God; restraining, constantly, the corruption of his nature from breaking out into any great impurity or crime, subduing every day his passions, purifying his affections, studying to do every thing in and for God, and endeavouring a continual resignation of his will to him? And in this we must not regret his few years, and the shortness of his days; for with God one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. Length of life is not to be measured by many revolutions of the heavens, but by the progress we have made in the great design for which we are sent into the world: and in this respect he, being sanctified in a little time, hath fulfilled a long time; so that he hath truly lived much in a few years, and died an old man in eight and twenty. He hath now finished the work that God hath given him to do: he hath accomplished the thing for which he was sent in-

to the world: by death he hath now perfected the sacrifice of himself, and the will of God is fulfilled in him. Whatever horror there may be in death to the natural man, however terrible it is to the wicked and impenitent, yet to the godly, to all who consider it in Jesus Christ, it is full of joy and comfort. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who hath given us the victory through Jesus Christ our Lord. He hath made the king of terrors to become the object of the most ardent desires and wishes of his own; for, if to us to live be Christ, sure,

To die is gain. I will not now launch out into this boundless ocean, to speak of the unspeakable happiness of the other world, and of the great advantages of the death of those whose life is Christ's. But O how may this, after the example of the ancient Christians, fill us with joy and comfort, in the pious and well-grounded hopes of the happiness of our dear friend! Well may we think we hear him say, Why do you mourn for me? Weep not for me, but weep for yourselves; for to me to die is gain. We live still in a world of sin and misery, of darkness and folly: we see nothing here but matter of tears and grief; we are among a crowd of people who are marching on to eternal misery, who know not but the next step may bring them to their journey's end; and yet never think of any thing, but filling their bellies, satisfying their lusts, or worrying one another by the way. We have great difficulty to find the strait path to eternal life; and when we know it, and are entered into it, the seeming pleasure of the by-paths, the temptations and example of the throng about us, a rooted corruption within us, and a subtle enemy that watches us, are ready at every step to betray us, and to turn us aside into the paths that lead to destruction: and what a blessing is it to be free of all these?

How happy is our friend, who enjoys, now, an absolute freedom from all the pains, and griefs, and troubles of this miserable world; who is out of the reach of all those temptations and snares; whose soul is unclogged

from an earthly body, freed from its guilt, and cleansed from its corruptions by the blood of Jesus, and put beyond the possibility of ever sinning or offending against its Maker, which now only begins to live, (the being born into this world being rather a death, and dying the beginning to live for ever;) being now all light, and life, and love, and motion, seeing and enjoying God; having its will wholly swallowed up in his; being, as it were, lost in him, and in the rapturous bliss of his love; joining in pure and holy friendship with angels and archangels, and the spirits of just men made perfect, in adoring and admiring our Maker and Redeemer, being enlarged in holy charity and ardent prayers for us poor mortals here below, and rejoicing over one sinner that repenteth; waiting for the redemption of the body, when this mortal shall put on immortality, and what is here sown in corruption and a natural body, shall be raised in incorruption and spiritual; and death shall be swallowed up in victory, when they shall happily be reunited, and live in joy and bliss to all eternity? Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord; they rest from their labours, and their works do follow them. They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament: and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever. Who can speak aright of that happiness which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived? O let us not bewail the absence of our friend with fruitless sighs or tears; nor sorrow as they that have no hope: but let us always endeavour, after his example, so to live to Christ in this world, that our death may be the same gain and advantage to us; that with him, and all the blessed spirits, we may live in eternal friendship and love with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, God over all blessed for evermore. *Amen.*

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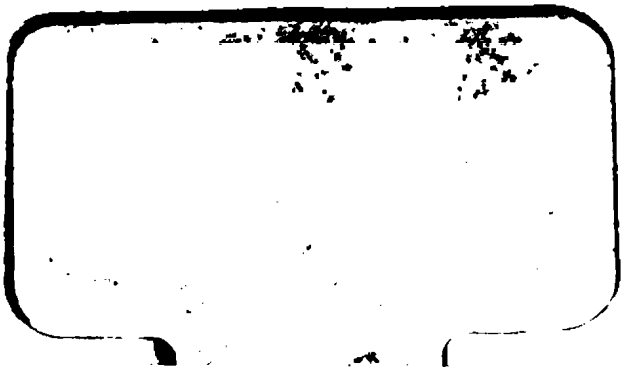

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